



DANTE

THE DIVINA COMMEDIA
AND
CANZONIERE

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VITH NOTES STUDIES
.ND ESTIMATES

IN FIVE VOLUMES

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DANTE

Vol V STUDIES AND ESTIMATES

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Frontispiece—DANTE: from the Torrigiani bust at Florence, made from a cast taken after death at Ravenna, A.D. 1321

THE GENESIS AND GROWTH OF THE "COMMEDIA"

I

It is not easy to assign a date to the time when the first germ of Dante's great poem was planted in the fruitful soil of his brain and heart. One gifted with a prophet's insight might, I am inclined to think, have seen it, in its promise and potency of a yet unconscious life, within a few days of that marvellous May morning which transformed and transfigured the whole nature of the wondrous boy (*V. N.* c. 1). From that hour, as we know, Beatrice was never absent from his thoughts, worshipped with all the power—such as we often discern even in natures less sensitive than Dante's—of a boy's idolising devotion. One half of the *Commedia* (if indeed we may distinguish where it is impossible to divide) was involved in the manner in which that thought dominated his mind and heart during the whole period of his boyhood. Nor could the other half be well absent. Twenty years before Giotto painted the Bargello portrait, Dante's eyes must have had that dreamy far-away look, that power of seeing things which others do not see, that "other-worldliness" that tells of a mind to which Heaven and Hell are the most real of all realities. The teaching which influenced his youth would tend to foster that tendency. His early recollections of Brunetto Latini, before he had seen, behind the veil of outward culture, the depravity which it concealed,

were those of one from whom he had learnt "how man attaineth to eternity" (*H.* xv. 85). The preaching of the Franciscan and Dominican friars (the former, we may remember, were established at what is now the Church of Santa Croce) had not yet lost its savour, and their sermons would tell him, with all the vividness which characterised mediæval thought, of the penalties of the lost and the beatific vision of the saints of God. Every mass that he heard would bring before him the thought of that region of the intermediate state in which souls that had departed with an imperfect holiness were purified from the stains of earth. Looking both to his gifts and his environment, it might almost be said of him, as it was said of the prophet to whom he turned in after years (comp. *H.* i. 32 *n.*), with the natural sympathy of one who saw in him a character like his own, that he too was "sanctified" from the earliest dawn of life, and "ordained to be a prophet unto the nations" (*Jer.* i. 5).

The studies of advancing youth—I am still speaking of the period before the story of the *Vita Nuova* begins—would tend in the same direction. Virgil was then, as in after years, the Master to whom he owed most of his mental nurture (*H.* i. 85), and the Sixth Book of the *Æneid* would impress upon his mind its vivid and indelible pictures of Tartarus and the Elysian fields. So he would come to blend, in that strange weird manner which so often startles us as we read the *Commedia*, the forms, names, and legends of classical antiquity with those which had at least a starting-point in Scripture, and which permeated the mind of the thirteenth century in Western Christendom. And when he came to study, as he must have done before he wrote the first sonnet in the *V. N.*, the poets of his own fatherland, the choice which he made of Guido Guinicelli of

Bologna, as the one in whom alone he recognised his "Master,"

> "When I thus heard his name who was of old
> My sire, and theirs, my country's nobler men,
> Skilled to use love-rhymes sweet and manifold,"
> —*Purg.* xxvi. 97–99.

was singularly significant. For Guido, in spite of the sin that stained his life, led his readers into the region of the Unseen and the Eternal, and the love of which he wrote was therefore that of the higher Erôs, of Aphrodite Urania. I take two passages by way of sample from his *Canzone* beginning

"*Avvegnachè del maggio più per tempo*"

> "In this blind world below we prove too well
> That all mankind in grief and anguish dwell,
> While Fortune turns her wheel in ceaseless round,
> Blest is the soul which leaves the fruitless strife,
> And seeks in Heaven the true eternal life,
> Where only perfect joy and peace are found."

* * * * *

> "Gaze on the joy, the bliss, wherein doth dwell
> My Lady fair, in Heaven incoronate,
> Whence comes to thee thy hope in Paradise,
> She now, all holy, thee remembers well,
> And, though in Heaven, thy heart doth contemplate,
> Which, for her sake, as if deserted, lies.
> She sees it painted in such blessed guise
> That what was here but as a marvel strange,
> Finds there its likeness true that sees no change;
> So much the more as it is better known,
> How, welcomed as their own,
> The angels hailed her with glad melodies.
> Thy spirits have brought back their tidings rare,
> For ofttimes thither they in travel fare,
> Of thee she speaketh with the souls in bliss
> And saith to them, 'While yet I lived on earth,
> I had from him all honour due to worth,
> Still praising me in those famed songs of his;
> And I pray God, our Lord and Master true,
> As best may meet your wish, to comfort you.'"

"That strain we heard was of a higher mood," and we cannot wonder that Dante should have turned to it rather than to the earlier Italian poets, such as Frederick II., or his Chancellor, Pier della Vigne, or Jacopo Lentino, the "notary" of *Purg.* xxiv. 56, as a model for imitation, that it should have seemed to him to put him on a higher level than that of his personal friends Guido Cavalcanti or Cino of Pistoia, in whose sonnets and *canzoni* there was more of the earthly erotic character. He was content to leave to Cino the place due to the "poet of love," he claimed for himself the higher title of the "poet of righteousness" (*V. E.* ii. 2). Not a few of the noblest passages of the *Commedia* sound in our ears as echoes of Guinicelli. In *H.* v. 100,

"*Amor, che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,*"

we have an almost verbal reproduction of the opening line of Guido's *canzone*,

"*Al cor gentile ripara sempre amore,*"

while in the similitude, not then hackneyed as it has become since of "true as the needle to the pole,"

"*E dirizzar lo ago in ver la stella,*"

we find the original of Dante's (*Par.* xii. 28)

"And from the heart of one of those new lights
There came a voice which made me turn to see,
E'en as the star the needle's course incites."

And so, from the first, we note the undertone of melancholy, the "pathetic minor," which, even in the bright dawn of youth, pervades the poet's reverie. He stands among the crowds of his associates, in the terms which Milton has made familiar, not as *L'Allegro*, but as *Il Penseroso*, and the latter poem might almost serve, from first to last, as an ideal picture of Dante's student life.

What I have said as to the character of the early poems lies almost on the surface. The vision of *Sonn.* i. is one which he could not remember without a shudder, in which he learnt to see afterwards a prophecy of the valley of the shadow. The death, early in his intimacy with the married Beatrice, of her best loved friend, whom I have identified with the Matilda of the Earthly Paradise (see note on *Purg.* xxviii. 40), leads his thoughts to the region within the veil. The Lord of Angels had called her to His glory, and the world was poorer for her absence (*V. N.* c. 3). Beatrice's seeming scorn makes him feel the woes of lost souls, the *discacciati tormentosi*, such as he paints in the *Inferno* (*V. N.* c. 14, *Sonn.* vii.). Soon, in the *Canzone* (ii.) which begins—

"*Donne, ch' avete intelletto d'amore,*"

we note the foreboding that the time of his beatitude will not be long. Heaven feels that it lacks somewhat of its completeness as long as Beatrice is not there. It is only the forbearance of God—forbearance for his sake—that prolongs her life on earth.

"My well-beloved, now suffer ye in peace
That this your hope, as long as I shall please,
Wait, where one dwells whom loss of her shall try,
And who shall tell the damned in Hell's unrest,
'I have beheld the hopes of all the blest'"

There, if not before, I see not the germ only of the *Commedia*, but the first stirrings of its life, as yet, it may be, tentative, almost, one might say, tentacular, in its workings, throwing out its feelers in this and that direction, and drawing in nutriment for its future work. The death of Beatrice's father (*V. N.* c. 22)—he also is spoken of as "passing from this life to eternal glory"—tended more and more to foster this sense of nearness to the invisible world, and soon that

sense took form in the words which came unbidden to his lips: "It must needs be that one day the gentle Beatrice herself must die" (*V. N.* c. 23), and that thought was followed by the prophetic vision in which he saw the forms of sorrowing ladies who told him that she had indeed departed from this world; and then he beheld a multitude of angels gazing on a white cloud of dazzling whiteness, and singing their *Hosanna in excelsis.* And then he thought that he looked on her dead body and the ladies covered her head with a white veil, and her face was so full of lowliness that it seemed to say to him, "I am about to see the source of all peace," and he called on Death ("*dolcissima Morte*") to come and release him from his sorrow, and then saw all the mysteries of grief which are wont to be celebrated in the chamber of the dead, and he looked up to Heaven and said, "O fairest soul, how blessed is he who sees thee!" The vision clothed itself in the marvellous *Canzone* (iv.) to which I content myself with referring the reader.

Every month, as the *V. N.* (c. 26) tells us, seemed to bring Beatrice nearer to the heavenly life. Men said of her, as she passed, "This is no woman, but one of the fairest of the Angels of Heaven"—"This is a miracle. Blessed be the Lord who knoweth how to work so wonderfully!" Not only did she win honour and praise herself, but she brought praise and honour to those with whom she associated (*V. N.* c. 27). And then this ripeness for Heaven bore what must have seemed its natural fruit. The Lord of Righteousness called her to Himself, and glorified her by placing her under the banner of the Blessed Mary, the Queen whose name had been so often on Beatrice's lips, ever uttered with profoundest reverence (*V. N.* c. 29). Of his own sorrow, of that of the

whole city of which she had been the fairest ornament, I have spoken with sufficient fulness in my *Life of Dante*, and, for a like reason, I pass over the intermediate stages of the history of the "*donna gentile*," in its literal or allegorical meanings, and proceed at once to the closing vision of the *Vita Nuova*, in which we may rightly see a more developed, and therefore a more defined, growth of the germ which we have already seen in an earlier embryonic stage. He had beheld once before (*V. N.* c. 40), in the ninth hour of the day, the form of the glorified Beatrice in crimson apparel, as he had seen her when she first met his gaze. He began to repent and reproach himself for his disloyalty to her memory. And then, not long afterwards, there came another memorable vision, following on a sonnet (*S.* 31) in which he records that his sighs had passed beyond the *primum mobile* to the Empyrean sphere, the dwelling-place of God and of the angels and His saints, and then he adds (*V. N.* c. 43):—

"After this sonnet there appeared to me a marvellous vision in which I saw things which made me propose not to speak more of this Blessed One till I could treat of her more worthily. And to reach this goal I study, as she truly knows, as much as lies in my power, so that if it shall please Him, by whom all things live, that my life continue for some years to come, I hope to say of her what has never yet been said of any woman And then, may it please him, who is the Lord of Courtesy (comp. for the phrase, *H.* ii. 58 *n.*), that my soul may have power to turn and see the glory of its Mistress, that is to say, of that blessed Beatrice who gloriously looks upon the face of Him, *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus.*"

The *genesis* of the *Commedia* was thus obviously completed. The outline was at least sketched in the art-studio of the poet's soul. But there followed, as the words indicate, a necessary, though not, it may be, a prolonged, period of self-training. The date

assigned by experts to the composition of the *Vita Nuova* is 1297, and as the assumed date of the vision with which the *Commedia* opens is the Passion and Easter-tide of 1300, we have at least two or three years of preparation. We ask how that interval was employed, what was the nature of the preparation.

II.

The first question which would present itself to a man like Dante, with a purpose thus definitely formed, would be as to the vehicle in which he should embody his thoughts. In what language should he write? The training of the student, the habits of the time, his admiring reverence for Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, Statius, would all have suggested Latin. The remonstrances addressed to him twenty years later by his friend Joannes de Virgilio show that this was what was expected by scholars of a scholar. When Petrarch gained the poet's laureate wreath, it was on the strength of his Latin epic "Africa" far more than on that of his sonnets. The memorable letter that bears the name of Frate Ilario indicates, though one receives its testimony with reserve, that he had begun a Latin poem, at some time or other, after the orthodox Virgilian fashion—

"*Ultima regna canam, fluido contermina mundo.*"

It was well, as I have said, that he changed his mind. The poem of which this might have been the beginning would doubtless have been a marvel in its way. It would have reproduced Virgilian imagery in approximately Virgilian language. There would have been pictures of the threefold regions of the unseen world, in which Beatrice and Virgil and Dante himself would have played their parts in Latin hexameters.

It might, from time to time, have found editors and commentators, possibly even translators, or it might have slept in the dust of libraries forgotten and untouched. The process of thought which led to the change of purpose may be traced with sufficient clearness in the treatise *De Vulgari Eloquio* and in the *Convito*. Though both were written, wholly or in part, as their references to his suffering show, after his exile, they reproduce the thoughts of past years, and indicate the reasons of his final choice, In the first of these he begins, with a method and solemnity which remind one of Hooker, with treating of the two forms of speech which were open to him. He is entering on an untried field, in which he had no forerunner. "*Verbo aspirante de cœlis*," he will unfold for those who speak their mother-tongue the reasons which lead him to think, as he compares the *lingua vulgaris* with the language used by scholars and taught in the schools, that the former is the more noble of the two. Speech, he goes on to say, is the special attribute of man. Brute creatures have it not. Angels need it not, for they have an "ineffable sufficiency of intellect by which one is known to another with perfect clearness, or they see all things in the clear mirror of the Divine Mind" (*V. E.* i. 2; *Par.* xxvi. 106, 107). Man needed it, and therefore it was given to man. It was reasonable to think that it had been bestowed on Adam at his creation, and that the first word which he uttered was *El* or *Eli*, as the name of God (*V. E.* i. 4; *Par.* xxvi. 134), and though God did not need man's speech to know man's thoughts even before they were conceived in the mind, yet we may, with all reverence, say that it was acceptable to Him that His own gift of speech should be the medium of their utterance. Others may be so blinded by partiality that they may think their own

city and country the noblest in the world,[1] their own speech one compared with which all other tongues are as those of barbarians. It is not so with him. He is a citizen of the world ("*mundus est patria velut piscibus æquor*"), and though he has loved Florence from his youth upwards, though he loves it yet more in his exile from it, and thinks that no city on earth is pleasanter or fairer, yet, as a scholar and historian, he must assign to Hebrew the honour of having been the primeval language of mankind (*V. E.* i. 6). The pride of man seeking to scale the very heavens in the Tower of Babel led to the confusion of tongues, and only the descendants of Shem inherited some fragments of the ancient speech. Passing, as from the limitations of his knowledge was inevitable, to a narrower range of inquiry, he takes a rapid survey of the spoken languages of Europe, which he classifies, as in *H.* xxxiii. 80, according to their formula of affirmation, under four groups: (1) That of *jo* or *ja*, including Sclavonian, Hungarian, German, Saxon, English, and others. (2) That of *si*, including Spanish, French, and Latin, represented by Italian, as in *H.* xxvii. 33. (3) That of *oc*, in the south-west of Europe, specially in the region thence known as Languedoc. (4) That of *oil* or *oui*, in Northern France, bounded by Germany on the east, and the "English Sea" on the north (*V. E.* i. 8). He notes in passing that the last three have many points of contact with each other, while the first stands apart by itself, and illustrates the fact by some eight or nine examples. Still narrowing his range of inquiry in accordance with the purpose which had led him to undertake it, he confines himself to the dialects of

[1] The thought is expressed in a proverb worth preserving: "*Petramala*" (an insignificant country town, much as we might say "Little Pedlington"), "*civitas amplissima est, et patria majori parti filiorum Adæ*" (*V. E.* i. 6).

Italy, of which he notes not less than fourteen distinct varieties. Men of letters might give a preference to the language of *oïl*, in which had been written "the achievements of the Trojans and the Romans, and the Arthurian legends," but his love was given to that of *si*, to the Italian of which those who had sung most and subtly were the familiar friends and, as it were, members of its household ("*familiares et domestici*"). Among these he names "Cino of Pistoia and his friend," and he leaves us, in his reticence, half humble and half proud, to guess who that friend was. Each of the fourteen dialects are then passed under his scrutiny, and are for the most part condemned as rough, barbarous, inadequate for the poet's use. Rome occupies a position of bad pre-eminence; the speech of the hill-country of Casentino and Prato comes next (*V. E.* i. 11). Sicilian, the language of the earlier Italian poets, including Frederick II. and Manfred, had a better reputation (*V. E.* i. 12). Tuscany boasted of its purity, but the boast was vain. There was a provincial twang ("*non curialia sed municipalia*") even in Guido of Arezzo, Bonagiunta of Lucca, and Brunetto Latini of Florence. Exceptions to that rule, approximations to excellence, were found in Guido Cavalcanti, Lapo Gianni, and "one other" (again we are left to guess), and in Cino of Pistoia (*V. E.* i. 13). A passing tribute to the greatness of Sordello as great not only in poetry but in every form of speech, is associated with a favourable judgment of the dialects of Lombardy, and that used by the littérateurs of Bologna, such as Guido Guinicelli, Guido Ghislieri and others (*V. E.* i. 15), but the true perfect speech of Italy, "*illustre, cardinale, aulicum, et curiale*," "*illuminans et illuminatum*," was still to seek. It was the "panther," the symbol of animal perfec-

tion,[1] of which he was in search, and he could not doubt that he had the nets wherewith to take it and tame it for its own use (i. 16). With that haughty consciousness of a power to be, if not the creator, at least the artificer, of a new language which all Italy should welcome, he sufficiently vindicates the decision which led him to cancel his first sketch, if indeed it ever existed, and instead of

"*Ultima regna canam, fluido contermina mundo,*"

to write

"*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita.*"

It is noticeable, however, that through the whole treatise (as indeed in the *Convito* also), there is not a single word which implies the existence, even in plan and purpose, of the *Commedia*. That, I take it, he worked at in secret, not caring to talk of it till the great work was finished as a κτῆμα εἰς ἀεὶ, a perpetual possession for Italy and for the world.

The *Convito*, which, it must be remembered, was also written (in part at least) in exile, and before the *V. E.* (*Conv.* i. 3, 5), deals with the question in a less systematic form, but for that very reason is more interesting as the expression of Dante's feelings. There too he had to decide whether he should write in Latin or Italian, and he gives his reasons for choosing the latter. Some are fanciful enough. The book was a commentary on his *Canzoni*, which were in Italian, and the commentator is the servant of his text. Latin was the "sovran" speech, Italian the subordinate; there would be therefore an inversion of the right order in writing a Latin exposition of an Italian text (*Conv.* i. 6, 7). More true and natural was the thought that by using Italian he would reach

[1] The symbolism may have originated in the rarity and beauty of the animal. Dante's master, Latini, probably from a fanciful etymology of the name, describes it as "*Amico di tutti animali*," and this would fall in with Dante's thoughts as to the perfect speech for poets (*Trés.*, v. 62).

a far wider circle of readers, and so far as he had things to utter which it was good for men to know, he would be a more universal benefactor (*Conv.* I. 8), and therefore acquire the friendship (we note the heart-yearnings of the lonely exile) of a far larger number. This was a sufficient reason for his not choosing Latin. And the thought of choosing any other modern speech than that of his fatherland rouses him to a burning white heat of indignation. The history of Provençal literature was that of the prostitution of noble gifts to vilest uses ("*hanno fatta di donna, meretrice*"). Those who had written in it in Italy were "base, abominable, unworthy sons," were led only by their own blindness, by malignant prejudice, by their craving for vain-glory, by their envy of the greatness of others, by their vileness and pusillanimity, which made them the slaves of each passing wave of popular opinion. Like bad workmen who find fault with their materials or their tools, they threw the blame of their failure as poets on the language which they had used, and which they deserted for another. They had failed in Italian; they might succeed in Provençal. It was not so with him. He had sufficient loftiness of soul to feel self-confidence ("*sempre il magnanimo si magnifica in suo cuore*"). He loved his mother tongue with a passionate devotion, which had ripened, as it were, into friendship. It had been his greatest benefactor, was associated with his earliest memories (*Par.* XV. 121–123), had led him to the way of knowledge. Without it he could not have learnt Latin. The fuller intimacy which rose out of his bringing it into the closer service of rhyme and rhythm had confirmed that friendship. Above all, he had always thought in that language. It had been his companion in his highest contemplations, his most subtle questionings. Therefore he would use it (here also

there is not the remotest allusion to the *Commedia*) for his *Convito*. So should a thousand guests partake of that banquet and leave some baskets full of fragments for himself; so should the speech of Italy be as a "new light, a new sun, to those who are in darkness and obscurity" (*Conv.* i. 13).

That point then was settled. Here, also, he took his own line and formed a *parte per se stesso.* He would write in Italian. He felt confident that he, at least, would have no occasion to find fault with his tools, that, as he said, after he had finished his work, even rhymes would be his servants and not his masters (*Ott. Comm. H.* x. 85).

But then came a question which must have called for some serious thought. What form of verse should he adopt? The earlier Italian poets who had preceded him had been essentially lyric in their character, and had confined themselves to sonnets, *ballate*, and *canzoni*, such as he himself had used in his Minor Poems, and these were unfitted for the continuity of a poem of the nature of an epic. So far as I know he had no Italian predecessor in the use of the *terza rima.* If he was not the inventor of that form, he was at least the first to import it from the literature of Provence, in which it is said to have been used by Arnauld Daniel, for whom, both in *V. E.* ii. 2, 6, 10, 13, and *Purg.* xxvi. 119, Dante expresses the warmest possible admiration, and who had originated the yet more complicated and unmanageable *sestina.* It commended itself, we may believe, on more than one ground. It lent itself readily to a continuous narrative. It presented the kind of difficulty from which Dante did not shrink, and which it gave him an actual joy to overcome. He felt sure, as the writer of the *Ottimo Commento* says that he had told his sons, that it would never make him write otherwise than he had meant to

write, that the very necessity of finding rhymes would often be suggestive of new thoughts. Whatever mastery he had gained in other more or less artificial forms of poetry would stand him in good stead here. If, at first, it might seem to retard his progress, he soon found that he had acquired a full control over it, and probably learnt before long even to think in *terza rima*, so that the "spontaneous numbers" flowed readily from his pen. And then also it connected itself with the strange mystic reverence for the number three, which shows itself in the *Vita Nuova* (*V. N.* c. 30). A poem in honour of Beatrice ought to be in the form which was most identified with the symbol of her excellence, and which was also the symbol of the Divine Perfection. A like profound reverence for the mystical significance of numbers showed itself, after the choice of the metre, in the plan of the whole poem. For him the number ten was the most perfect of all numbers; the square of that number carried that perfection to a yet higher power, and therefore the poem was to consist of a hundred cantos. But the threefold nature of the Unseen World, as it presented itself to his thoughts, compelled him to divide the poem into three parts, or, as he calls them, Cantiques, and as it was natural to think of the first canto as a prelude or introduction, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise had thirty-three cantos assigned to each. It would scarcely have surprised us had the love of self-imposed restraint, which characterised him, as it has characterised other great masters of his art, led him to a like limitation in regard to the number of the lines in each canto. Here, however, he wisely drew the line. He felt that such a restraint would interfere with the freedom of his thoughts, and he chose therefore to assert his freedom, taking 140 as an approximate standard.[1]

[1] The *Inferno* contains 4588 lines, the *Purgatorio* 4756, the *Paradiso* 4738, giving 14,082 for the hundred cantos.

It is possible that he may have begun his poems before fixing on a title; possible also, of course, that he may have chosen it from the first. The fact that he speaks of it in *H.* xvi. 128 as the *Commedia* is, as far as it goes, in favour of the latter hypothesis. The reasons which he gives for so naming it in the *Ep. to Can Grande* are sufficiently familiar to most Dante students. He knows enough Greek (though his explanation of "tragedy"[1] is somewhat startling) to interpret *Comœdia* as a *village song* (*villanus cantus*). He knows enough of the traditions of dramatic art to feel that a tragedy begins with joy and ends with sorrow, that a comedy begins with trouble and ends with gladness.[2] His poem began with Hell and ended with Paradise, and on that ground might be styled a comedy. And there was yet another reason. Tragedy was supposed to speak always in the lofty and stately language of the "grand style." Comedy had a wider range, might say the very thing the poet wished to say, in homeliest and plainest fashion, and yet was allowed to rise at times to a strain of higher tone. Not without significance does Dante quote the line of Horace (*Ep. ad Pis.* l. 93):—

"*Interdum tamen et vocem comœdia tollit.*"

With these thoughts there mingled something of a proud humility. For him the epic and the tragedy were near of kin. To have called his poem by either name would have implied something like a rivalry with the master whom he loved and honoured. He was content to call it a comedy—Terence was the writer

[1] He connects the word rightly enough with τράγος, but explains it as "*fœtidus ad modum hirci.*" He does not appear to know the other derivation of *Comœdia* as from κῶμος (=revelry)

[2] (*Ep. to C. G.* c. 10 *n.*) Fraticelli quotes from the *Catholicon* of Fra Giovanni of Genoa (1286). "*Unde in salutatione solemus mittere et optare tragicum principium et comicum finem, id est, bonum principium et lætum finem.*"

most familiar to him as a comic author (*Purg.* xxii. 97)—and under that title to write what had remained "unattempted yet in prose or rhyme" by Terence or any other author. We may, however, perhaps doubt whether he would have chosen that name at the end of his work had he not made choice of it at the beginning. The grim grotesqueness of many of the pictures of the Inferno, the games of the demons with the sinners in the seething pitch (*H.* xxi., xxii.), the reciprocal transformations of man and serpent (*H.* xxv.), were probably brought in as part of the comic element, like the equally grotesque figures in mediæval cathedrals, but these cease as he passes into the other divisions of his poem. He invokes Calliope (*Purg.* i. 9), Urania (*Purg.* xxix. 41), Apollo (*Par.* i. 13), but never Thalia. The "comedy" has become for him a "*poema sacro*" (*Par.* xxv. 1); and so far he anticipates the epithet of *Divina* which later writers have attached to it, and which first appears in the Venice edition of 1554.

III.

The language and the outward form of the poem being thus determined, there would come the question, what was to be its scope and purpose? Was it to aim at anything beyond a description of the three kingdoms of the dead and the glorification of Beatrice? His dedicatory Epistle to Can Grande, as characteristic in its way as Spenser's Epistle to Sir Walter Raleigh setting forth the plan of the *Faerie Queene*, and presenting many suggestive coincidences with it,[1]

[1] I am not aware that any writer on Dante has noticed the parallelism, but it will be seen that it is sufficiently significant. Spenser describes his book as "a continued Allegory, or darke Conceit." The story of King Arthur is but the outward framework of the allegory. The Faerie Queene is at once Glory and "the glorious person of our Soveraine the Queen," as Beatrice is both the woman whom Dante had loved and the Wisdom which teaches him a true theology. But as Elizabeth was not only ' a most royal Queene

answers that question. He adopts for his own "sacred poem" the fourfold method of interpretation which applied to the sacred books, poems or otherwise, of Scripture. And so the subject of the whole *Commedia* taken literally is the "state of souls after death" (*Ep. to C. G.* c. 8). But allegorically it takes a wider range, and includes the whole moral government of God, and its subject is, "Man, so far as by merit or demerit, in the exercise of the freedom of his will, he is under a system of rewards and punishments." It is obvious that the distinction which he draws involves the conclusion that he meant men to see, in the distribution of those rewards and punishments on earth, examples of the same laws as those which work out their completion in the regions behind the veil. Each man may find in his own experience, or in the history of the world, the anticipation of Hell and Purgatory and Paradise; may see in the poet's pictures to what possible depths of degradation he may fall, how he may repent and rise to higher things on the "stepping-stones of his dead self," how, even on earth, he may attain to the citizenship of the true Rome of which Christ is a Roman (*Purg.* xxxii. 102), to the heavenly Jerusalem.

In writing to a man like Can Grande, whose position and character placed him outside the range of esoteric discipleship, Dante was content to hint at the key which was to open the treasure-house, to apply his method on the largest, and therefore the vaguest, scale. Those to whom it was given to know the inner mysteries of the poem would soon discover in Dante's language that it was "*polysemum*"[1] (*Ep. to C.*

or Empresse," but also "a most vertuous and beautiful lady," she appears in the poem not as Gloriana only, but also as Belphœbe. So also the Red-Cross Knight is at once the symbol of holiness, and of the English people, Duessa of falsehood in general and of the Church of Rome, or perhaps also of Mary Queen of Scots in particular.

[1] A *v. l.* gives "*polysensuum.*"

G. c. 7), a poem of manifold meanings (Dante does not pass beyond the literal and allegoric, and leaves the moral and anagogic, or mystic, for others to trace out), and that the end he aimed at also was manifold. There might be a nearer and a more remote object present to the writer's mind. He will confine himself —he is obviously dealing with a pupil dull of hearing and slow of heart to understand—passing over all more subtle interpretations, to saying that what he aimed at was to "rescue those who are living in this life from a state of misery, and to lead them to a state of felicity" (*ibid.* c. 18). But for us, as for the inner circle of Dante's personal disciples. if indeed he had any, it is open to seek for more meanings and more purposes than those thus roughly adumbrated, and so far the allegorising schools of interpreters are fully within their rights. To take a few salient instances, where there is something like a consensus, Beatrice is the daughter of Folco de' Portinari; she is also the symbol of a true Philosophy (the subordinate philosophy symbolised by the "*donna gentile*" of *V. N.* c. 36; *Conv.* ii. 13 disappears from the *Commedia*), of Catholic theology, of the supreme contemplative wisdom which includes both philosophy and theology. Virgil is the poet on whose lines Dante had framed his own "goodly style" (*H.* i. 81–87). He is also the representative of human wisdom guiding perfectly within its limits, though unable to lead the pilgrim into the region of supernatural light. Lucia (*H.* ii. 97 *n.*) is the saint of Syracuse; she is also the grace that illuminates man's natural reason. Cato (*Purg.* i. 74), in like manner, represents the highest form of merely human righteousness. The Centaurs (*H.* xii. 56 *n.*) symbolise the varied combinations of the brute and spiritual elements in man's life. Geryon (*H.* xvii. 1 *n*) is the type of all fraudulent and counterfeit

shows of good. The four stars (*Purg.* i. 23 *n.*) are the cardinal natural virtues of Plato's ethical language; the three which make up the heptad (*Purg.* viii. 89) are the Faith, Hope, Love of Christian ethics. The Mountain Delectable (*H.* i. 77 *n.*) is the ideal polity after which Dante was striving as the salvation of his country, as well as the ideal righteousness which would be his own salvation. The three beasts which barred his ascent (*H.* i. 31–51 *n.*), whatever other meanings they may have, had, at all events, one which was moral, and represented sensuality, pride, and greed of gain, while they may point also to states and parties that were characterised by these vices.

As the history of Biblical interpretation shows, however, the student stands in need of guidance in applying this method of many senses even to a poem which was avowedly written to be so interpreted. He may read much between the lines (*e.g.*, the multitudinous fantasies of which the history may be found in Dr. F. W. Farrar's *Bampton Lectures*) which is purely the product of his own brain, possessed by a dominant idea, which was never in the brain of the writer. That seems to me the error into which men like Rossetti and Aroux have fallen. It was not that they were wrong in assuming that there might be more than one allegorical meaning in the symbols of the *Commedia*, but that they constructed a Dante out of their inner consciousness, in the one case, with a mind into which nothing entered but a wild non-religious Ghibellinism; in the other, as in the title of Aroux's book, with the thoughts of a "*révolutionnaire, socialiste, hérétique,*" concealing a Nihilistic Atheism under the garb of conventional orthodoxy. To escape those perils on the right hand, or the left, we must take the humbler part of inquiring, as far as the investigation is open to us, what were actually the

poet's dominant ideas, what he was likely to wish others to read between the lines.

And here the answer to that inquiry is not far off. We find it first in the books which he had written wholly or in part before he began the *Commedia.* These were the *Vita Nuova* and the *De Monarchiâ.*[1] Beatrice is the subject of the one. The ideal polity which should guide men to righteous government and therefore to blessedness on earth, and to the reward of righteousness in heaven, is the subject of the other. We shall hardly be mistaken if we are prepared to find both those subjects interwoven with the whole plan and framework of the *Commedia.* The elements of the *Confessions* of Augustine and of his *De Civitate Dei* are, as it were, united. That inference is strengthened by a fact, subordinate in itself, yet, I think, sufficiently suggestive. The names which such a man as Dante gave his children were, in the nature of the case, likely to be chosen on other grounds than the common ones of sponsorship or relationship. Well-nigh all biographers have dwelt on the pathos of his naming one daughter Beatrice. To me there is something hardly less suggestive in his naming his only other daughter Imperia.[2] Beatrice and Imperia answered respectively to the *Vita Nuova* and the *De Monarchiâ.* They are evidence of what were the dominant ideas of the poet's mind when he began to write the *Commedia.* One wonders which of the two was his favourite child, and whether they were twins. We have seen, though only in outline,

[1] The date of the *V. N* is inferred from its being written before Guido Cavalcanti's death. That of the *Mon.* from the absence of any reference to Dante's exile.

[2] The name does not appear in Litta's *Famiglie* nor in the pedigree given by Fraticelli and many other biographers. It is given, however, by Passerini (*Della fam. di Dante*, p. 63 in *Bartoli*), and is accepted by A. v. Reumont in *D. Gesell.* ii. 339. The latter states that she was married to one of the house of Pantaleoni, and that her sons were living in 1361, but does not give his authorities.

how the Beatrice idea, with some of its ramifying symbolisms, was represented in the general plan of the great poem, which was penetrated and pervaded by it. Nor was it less so with the idea represented by the empire. The opening canto brings before us not only the conversion of the sinner, but the restoration of the empire, and through that the regeneration of Italy (*H.* i. 100–111). Virgil is something more than the symbol of human wisdom, the hierophant of the mysteries of Hades, and becomes the poet-prophet of the *Imperium Romanum* who has sung how

> "*Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem.*"

He has tracked its pre-Christian history (*Æn.* vi. 755–854), and has in noblest words sketched out the true ideal of such an empire's greatness :—

> "*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento ;*
> *Hæ tibi erunt artes, pacisque imponere morem,*
> *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.*"

> "Remember thou, O Roman, that 'tis thine
> To rule the nations as of right divine ;
> These be thy arts ; to settle steadfast peace,
> To spare the meek and bid the proud ones cease "
> —*Æn.* vi 851–3.

The imperial character continues throughout impressed upon the poem. God Himself is the great Imperator (*H.* i. 124 ; *Par.* xii. 40, xxv. 41). The Apostles are the Barons of His Court (*Par.* xxiv. 115, xxv. 17), the Saints in general are His Counts (*Par.* xxv. 42). The greatest criminals in Hell, those who have sinned most against the Divine purpose and the obligations of human loyalty, are Brutus, Cassius, and Iscariot. The apocalyptic vision of *Purg.* xxxiii. sets forth, beneath its veil of symbolism, the relations, true or distorted, of the Empire and the Church. The miseries of Italy are traced to the neglect or

degeneracy of the Emperors and Popes who have been unfaithful to their calling (*Purg.* vi. 97–127; *Par.* xxvii. 19–63). Its restoration to peace and unity is found only in the hope of the true *Dux*, who shall at last realise the ideal (*Purg.* xxxiii. 43, *n.*). The speech of Justinian (*Par.* vi. 1–99) sketches the progress of the elect people of God,—from Dante's standpoint, not Israel but the Romans,—to their high position as the instruments of His providence. Even the problems of physical science gain another character when they are thought of as symbols of the true polity (*Par.* ii. 49, *n.*). The grief that eats deepest into the poet's soul is that the contending Guelphs and Ghibellines, by whose discord Italy was torn asunder, were alike contented with a half-truth which they thus turned into a falsehood (*Par.* vi. 100–111). He seeks throughout to establish his theory of the two independent co-ordinate powers by which, if they would but understand their right relations to each other, mankind might be led at once to the earthly Paradise of righteousness and peace, *Imperium et Libertas*, and to the heavenly Paradise of the Church militant and at last triumphant (*Mon.* iii.).

It is not difficult with these facts before us to assign to each of Dante's prose works its right relations to the *magnum opus* of the *Commedia*. The *De Vulgari Eloquio* is obviously but a half-finished sketch—it was to have been in at least four books (*V. E.* ii. 4), and there are only two—of the preliminary studies into the nature, office, and history, first of language in general, then of Italian in particular, then of the several modes of rhythmic speech, which led him to his decision as to the outward form of the *Commedia*. The *Vita Nuova* traces the genesis and growth of the Beatrice idea which, in its transfigured and completed form, pervades the great poem from its beginning to its end.

The *De Monarchiâ* represents in like manner the imperial idea which is never absent from it. The position which the *Convito* occupies is somewhat more anomalous and more difficult to fix with precision. Parts of it were clearly written after his exile from Florence (B. i. 3), probably in the earlier years of that exile,[1] but parts, in the judgment of some of the most expert of Dante scholars (Witte, Scartazzini), were written at an earlier date.[2] Its whole tone, practically substituting, as it does, the "*donna gentile*" of philosophy, as 'the daughter of the great Emperor of the Universe" (*Conv.* ii. 16), for Beatrice, as the representative of the higher and more heavenly wisdom of a true theology, points to the state of mind which preceded the conversion with which the poem opens and which I have elsewhere assigned to his spiritual experience in the year of Jubilee. In the slow, wearied, baffled attempts to scale the Delectable Mountain, on which he saw a far-off "rose of dawn," we may, without unduly allegorising, rightly see the attempt which the *Convito* records (B. ii.) to gain completeness for himself and his country with no other aid than that of his unassisted reason. In the deliberate withdrawal in the *Commedia* of statements physical, ethical, philosophical, which he had made in the *Convito*,[3] we may trace something like the repent-

1 The *quasi mendicando* seems to me to imply this. In later years the patronage of Moroello di Malaspina, Can Grande, and Guido da Polenta of Ravenna must have raised him above actual beggary. He had his sons with him at Lucca, and his daughter Beatrice at Ravenna.

2 The passage in *Conv* i. 8 which speaks of the *V. E.* as still in contemplation is, I think, sufficiently explained on the assumption that the latter book was still in its unfinished state and had not been published.

3 I note a few of the more prominent instances: (1) *Conv.* i. 1 represents knowledge as the supreme perfection of man's nature; *Par.* xxiii. finds that perfection in the vision of God. (2) So in *Conv.* i. 1 knowledge is the "bread of angels," in *Par.* ii. 11 God Himself is that bread. (3) In *Conv.* ii. 5 the forces that move the spheres are said to be popularly (by *la volgare gente*) known as angels. In the *Paradiso* we note no such half contemptuous reserve (4) In *Conv.* ii 16 the "*donna gentile*" is identified with Philosophy, as the daughter of the Emperor of the Universe, and her demonstra-

ance and shame which finds more definite utterance in *Purg.* xxx., xxxi., and which gives to portions of the *Commedia* at least a partial resemblance to the *Retractationes* of Augustine, or to Cardinal Newman's recantations, after his conversion to Rome, of the hard things which he had written against her in the days of his earlier Anglicanism.

And the *Convito* also, we must remember, is an unfinished work. Its plan included fourteen books, and we have but four, and there is not the slightest shadow of an indication that he ever wrote more. That fact alone seems to me eminently suggestive. When he began it, he obviously contemplated it as a great encyclopædic work, embodying, in a form which would reach the average Italian reader, all the stores of knowledge which he had accumulated during many years of study, and win for the writer the greatest measure of friendship and applause. There must have been some weighty reason for the abandonment of so cherished a purpose begun before his exile and continued after it. And the reason which I am led to assign seems to me at once probable and sufficient. He began to feel that he was working in the two books, the *Convito* and the *Commedia*, on different lines leading to opposite conclusions. The two tasks were incompatible, and he had to make his choice between them. And so he abandoned what had seemed to promise the immediate reward of a widespread popularity, for the lonely task in which he was content to labour, with only a side glance at a possible gleam of fame in the closing years of life (*Par.* xxv. 1–9), in the consciousness, first, that the work was its own exceeding great reward, and then that he was

tions are man's highest blessedness. In *Purg.* xxxi. 59 the "*donna gentile* thus allegorised is a "*pargoletta*," his love for whom Dante confesses with shame, and the highest truths that man knows are those which he receives undemonstrated but by faith (*Par.* ii. 40–46, xxiv. 91–96)

speaking to far-off generations to whom the time in which he lived would seem as part of ancient history (*Par.* xvii. 118–120). To that work he now consecrated all his time and thought, all the result of study and observation, and so that and the *Vita Nuova* are the only books which have come down to us in their completeness, while the *Convito*, the *De Monarchiâ*, the *De Vulgari Eloquio* were never, the *Convito* least of all, brought to the goal at which he aimed when starting.

It follows from what has been said that there are two facts of which the interpreter of the *Commedia* must take special note if he would not fall into the Scylla of fantastic hypothesis, or the Charybdis of a shallow literalism. He must remember that there is always likely to be more than one allegorical meaning lying beneath the veil of the letter, and that to limit his attention to one only is often to present but half the truth. The poem is, in fact, like "shot" silk, and presents different aspects according to the point of view from which men look on it, as the colours interpenetrate each other. A man like Ozanam sees only the gold of Catholic theology; a man like Rossetti sees only the purple of a Ghibelline imperialism. The student who varies his point of view learns that both are there, and that, blending with them, there are also threads of personal feeling, or Aristotelian ethics, or reminiscences of nature, brought in simply because of the joy it gave the poet's heart to remember and reproduce them.

And then, with this, there is the fact which commentators often forget, that the "sacred poem" grew slowly, through not less than eighteen or twenty years, and that during that period the poet's mind was subject to the conditions of growth and change. The *Purgatorio* was not written in the same temper or

with the same thoughts as the *Inferno*. The *Paradiso* reflects the wide knowledge and the workings of the poet's mind when it had attained a fuller ripeness than in either of the two. To forget this is much as if one should interpret Isaiah or Jeremiah or St. Paul without taking into account the influence which the incidents of their own lives, and the events of contemporary history, had upon their thoughts. In some cases, it is true, there are indications in the earlier parts of the *Commedia* of touches added at a later period. Foscolo was right, I believe, in maintaining (*Disc.* xxv.–xxxiv., it is almost the one contribution to the study of Dante in the celebrated *Discorso sul Testo* of much value) that the poem was never, in any real sense of the word, published during the poet's lifetime, that he kept his MS. by him, sending copies of portions of it from time to time to friends like Uguccione della Faggiuola, Moroello Malaspina, Can Grande, and Joannes de Virgilio, and from time to time retouched and revised it. Those indications also the interpreter must keep in view if he would interpret rightly. Bearing these points in mind I proceed to a brief examination of each portion of the poem.

"HELL"

THE story of the recovery of the first seven cantos of the *Inferno*, of which Boccaccio tells us (Bocc. V. D.), leads to the conclusion that they were written at Florence before Dante left, and left it for ever, on his embassy to Rome. But if so, the Greyhound prophecy (*H.* i. 100–111), whether we refer it to Can Grande or Uguccione della Faggiuola or Henry VII.,

and Ciacco's prediction of the strife of parties (C. vi. 64–75), must have been added at a later period after his exile. The forecast of Farinata implies at least a date not earlier than 1304 (*H.* x. 79–82). That of Brunetto Latini points to a like conclusion, perhaps to a somewhat later date, when the poet saw a transient gleam of hope that his banishment might not be irrevocable, that both the contending parties of his city might court his alliance, *i.e.*, before the expedition of Henry VII. had roused the Guelphs of Florence to an enmity more irritated and more persistent than ever, and therefore fixes 1309, or at the latest, 1310, as a *terminus ad quem* (*H.* xv. 70–72). That of Nicolas III. indicates a date subsequent to the election of Clement V., 1305. The reference to Cahors in C. xi. 50 may possibly point to the election of John XXII., who was of that city, in 1316. On the whole, however, making allowance for these after-touches, the Ilarian letter, even if we look on it as apocryphal, is fair evidence that the *Inferno* had been substantially completed before the year 1309, and I shall assume therefore that it embraces the first seven or eight years of the fourteenth century, the period in Dante's life between his thirty-fifth and his forty-fourth years.

The first of those years I have connected with the definite crisis in the poet's life, which we may rightly speak of as his conversion, and which is recorded in the opening vision of C. i. The change was a very real one. He passed from darkness to light, from despair to hope, from bondage to, at least, the foretaste of freedom. But it was with him, as with others, the beginning of the New Life, not the end. The transformation of character was not complete, and the "old Adam" in him (*Purg.* ix. 10) was still strong in other forms than that which made him heavy to sleep,

in the burning indignation, the fiery "hate of hate" and "scorn of scorn," which were even kindled to a greater intensity than before by what came to him as the new discovery of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its hateful self-assertion, its loathsome foulness. Some lines which Cardinal Newman wrote many years ago in the *Lyra Apostolica,* seem to me the best explanation of much that startles and offends us as we read the *Inferno.* It was as if a voice had sounded in his ears—

"And would'st thou reach, rash scholar mine,
Love's high unruffled state?
Awake! thy easy dreams resign,
First learn thee how to hate."

And Dante, it must be admitted, did learn that lesson and bettered the instruction.

Nor can it be denied that there is a personal element of bitterness mingling with that hatred of evil as such. The wounds of that spirit, so *trasmutabile per tutte guise* (*Par.* v. 99), sensitive to the last point of sensitiveness, and not as yet "*ben tetragono ai colpi di ventura*" (*Par.* xvii. 24), winced at the slightest touch. He looked on his enemies as the enemies of God, and looked on them therefore as the writers of Pss. lxix. and cix. looked on theirs. If, in some cases, as in those of Francesca (*H.* v. 73), and Brunetto (*H.* xv. 22), he felt a natural pity for a doom which yet from his standpoint appeared to him inevitable, and therefore righteous, there are others, *e.g.*, as those of Filippo Argenti (*H.* viii. 61), in which he rejoices, with a savage joy which reminds us of Tertullian (*De Spect.* c. 30) and Milton (*Reform. in England, ad fin.*), at the working out of the law of retribution, and in seeing men reap the harvest of which they themselves had sown the evil seed. He feels, it is true, at times, even beyond the special instances just named, the

touch of human compassion, but he stamps it out as inconsistent with reverence for the Divine Righteousness (*H.* xx. 28). More than once even, as if he wished to set an example of the casuistry which taught that "no faith is to be kept with heretics," he represents himself as speaking words "that palter in a double sense" (*H.* xxxiii. 117, 150 *n.*), or yielding to the impulse which led him to add a fresh pain to the tortures of the damned (*H.* xxxii. 104). All this startles and shocks us, and more than anything else has given "occasion to blaspheme" to critics of the Voltaire and Landor and Leigh Hunt type. One would be sorry if it did not so. The only *apologia* of which the facts admit, is that here, in this stage of his growth, the man was not before or above his age. He judged as others judged, aad spoke as others spoke. There was scarcely a Council in which the word *Damnamus* had not been uttered, in the white heat of fanaticism, or the drowsy acquiescence of assent, on the past and future of heretics. Names were struck out of diptychs as though the souls for which they stood were past praying for. There was scarcely a monastery which had not its tales of oppressors or evil-doers who had been seen in torments.

I may add to that general defence one or two more personal considerations. It is not true that Dante places himself in the seat of judgment only or chiefly for the sake of delighting himself with the thought that his personal or political enemies are in Hell, or holding them up to everlasting shame, as worthy of it. The conditions of his poem forbade his placing any one among the lost (except by the poetic licence of a prophecy *ex eventu*, or of the idea that the souls may be in Hell while the body still lives and moves on earth, tenanted by a demon) who

was living in the spring of 1300, and it was not till after that date that the political conflicts of his life began, and in those instances, *e.g*, in Boniface VIII. (*H.* xix. 77), Clement V. (*H.* xix. 83), Branca d'Oria (*H.* xxxiii. 137), and Alberigo de' Manfredi (*H.* xxxiii. 118), there was enough evil, apart from any personal antagonism, to account for the condemnation (*ibid.*). An apparent parallel to these instances is found, we may remember, in the memorable scene in Southey's *Vision of Judgment*, in which, in the days of his rampant Toryism, he puts Wilkes in Hell and George III. among the saints in Paradise. Whether the thing was more pardonable in Southey, because with him it was only a piece of poetic machinery, his own creed being that of a Universalist, while Dante believed, with the full intensity of faith, that persistent evil, without even the germ or beginning of repentance on earth, must in very deed work out an everlasting retribution, as the natural consequence of its own abused freedom, I leave others to discuss. All the same I admit frankly that Dante in this matter, whatever plea one may put in on his behalf as a man or as a poet, presents a warning and not an example. We learn how perilous it is, even to the supremest intellect, and the most righteous indignation that persuades itself that it does well to be angry, to dwell over much, in the temper of a judgment without mercy, on the mysteries of evil and its punishment, how even they may catch, in some measure, the infection of the evils they condemn. And, if I mistake not, Dante himself intimates in no obscure terms his consciousness of not having altogether escaped that peril. The chief element in his joy when he issues forth from the dark world which he had traversed is that he can once more "look upon the stars," and those stars, as the first canto of the

Purgatorio indicates, are not merely the orbs visible to sense in the firmament of Heaven, but the symbols of the four noblest virtues of heathen ethics. To those who read, as Dante wishes us to read, the inner allegory beneath the veil of the letter, there can scarcely, I think, be a question that he meant us to learn the lesson that to dwell too much on evil is to lose the power of contemplating good; that to know vice in its hideousness, even if it be necessary, as he assumes that it was necessary for him and might be for others (*H.* i. 112–120; *Purg.* xxx. 136–138), is not sufficient, that contact with that evil, even when we condemn it, brings with it a contamination of its own from which the soul needs to be cleansed. Before he can begin the ascent of the Mountain of Purification, the hands of Virgil have to wash off the stains which the murky smoke of Hell has left upon his face, that is, upon his inmost soul, and which have marred for a time the clear vision of the Truth (*Purg.* i. 124–129).

As I have said, the years within which one may legitimately place the composition of the *Inferno*, 1300–1308, formed a transition stage in the trilogy of Dante's life. The Cantique itself bears witness that it was so. It bears the stamp of the same studies as the *Convito.* Its ethics are those of Aristotle, as Dante might have learnt them from Averrhoës, rather than of Aquinas. He quotes Boethius as his guide (*H.* v. 123; *Conv.* ii. 13). Even after what I have called his conversion, he falls back upon the classical imagery of Tartarus, the city of Dis and the Elysian fields, and Minos, and Charon, and Cerberus, and the Furies, and Acheron, and Lethe, and Geryon, and the Centaurs, rather than on those which Christian mythology had inherited from the Gospel of Nicodemus. He is an ethical teacher primarily, and his

character as a theologian is as yet imperfectly developed. If, even in writing the *V. E.*, and while the *Vita Nuova* was his only completed work, he had claimed for himself the title of the "poet of righteousness," leaving that of the "poet of love" to his friend, Cino da Pistoia (*V. E.* ii. 2)—not, perhaps, without a tacit reference to the great work which, if he had not already begun it, he at least had in very definite contemplation,—much more was that thought dominant in him now. And the righteousness of which he looked on himself as the representative was, as it too often is in the first fiery glow of conversion at all times, and still was more likely to be in that fierce, cruel world of the thirteenth century, a righteousness but little tempered with compassion. He believed himself called to the office which he assumed. He was for a time one of the powers that be in God's government of the world, and he would not bear the sword in vain, nor handle the word of the Lord deceitfully. I do not believe, as I have said, that he was consciously influenced by personal antagonism or antipathy, but it was scarcely in human nature to escape their unconscious influence altogether.

In one point I note, on comparing the *Convito* and the *Inferno*, what seems to me to indicate the passing away of old things, the beginning of the life in which all things were to become new. When he wrote the former (*Conv.* iii. 14) he had cherished the hope of a heavenly Athens in which Stoics, Epicureans, Platonists, Peripatetics should meet on the common ground of their devotion to philosophy, a dream almost like that of the later renaissance, of which Marsilio Ficino was the representative. In the latter, there is in that catalogue of the great master minds who had been the chief objects of his reverence (*H.* iv. 130) something like a solemn farewell to those studies of the past.

His "wise guide leads him by another way," and he leaves them, with a pathos suggestively autobiographical, as those who could not help him to a higher knowledge than that to which they had themselves attained, with whom, if he had not found a truer guidance and a more excellent way, he must have remained for ever in the region of unsatisfied desires. They are left, for he thinks of them with kindlier feelings than Augustine did when he, after his conversion, looked back on his earlier studies (*Conff.* vii. 20), as in the Elysian fields,

> "On open ground, high, full of light and clear"
> (*H.* iv. 116),

but they could not lead him to the Paradise of God. He perhaps felt, as Augustine did, that the knowledge thus gained was of the kind that puffs up, and so makes its possessor incapable of a true union with God and a true communion with his fellows. The "*donna gentile*" of philosophy is no longer the mistress of his soul. He returns to his first love, and Beatrice, in her new transfigured character as the Theology which is one with Divine Wisdom, resumes her absolute, undisputed sway over his affections.

Some conclusions on minor matters follow from the dates thus assigned to the beginning and end of the *Inferno*. We are able, on the natural assumption that vivid local descriptions imply personal local knowledge, to say, with scarcely a shadow of a doubt, that before 1308 he had visited Bologna (*H.* xviii. 51, *n.*), Padua (*H.* xv. 6), Mantua (*H.* xx. 93), Venice (*H.* xxi. 7), the Lago di Garda (*H.* xx. 64–78), Rome (*H.* xviii. 29), Pola (*H.* ix. 113), Arles (*H.* ix. 112), Cologne (*H.* xxiii. 63), Bruges and Wissant (*H.* xv. 4), and probably also Paris, London (*H.* xii. 120), and Oxford. For further details on this point I may

refer to the *Study* on "Dante as an Observer and Traveller."

We can scarcely, however, pass from the *Inferno* without inquiring how far Dante was indebted to those who had preceded him in recording their visions of the Unseen World. Primarily, as we have seen, the Sixth Book of the *Æneid* supplied materials which he found ready to his hand, and of which he largely availed himself. It is possible, though not probable, that he may have had access, through translations or otherwise, to the vision of Hades in the *Odyssey* (B. xi.), or to the mythical representations of the unseen in the *Gorgias*, the *Phædo*, the *Republic* of Plato. That such visions should be prominent in Christian literature was, of course, to be expected, and the lists of the writings in which Dante may have come in contact with them is sufficiently long. The acts of Perpetua and Felicitas, quoted by Tertullian (*de An.* c. 35), and Augustine (*de An. Orig.* i. 10, iv. 18; *Serm.* 280, 283, 294), abound in such revelations of the Unseen World. The Life of Gregory the Great, by Paulus Diaconus, brought to his knowledge the story of Trajan as it appears in *Purg.* x. 73-93, and the *Dialogues* (iv. 36) of the same Father gave a picture of the punishment of the lost. Labitte, in his *La Divine Comédie avant Dante* (*Rev. d. Deux Mondes*, 4th ser., vol. xxxi.), gives a long list of visions more or less analogous from the sixth century, of which the most memorable are those of Drithelm, reported by Bede (*H. E.* v. 12) in the seventh century, of Wettin of Reichenau (near Constance), in 824 (given in the Benedictine *Acta Sanctorum*, v. p. 288), of Prudentius, Bishop of Troyes, in 839 (Hincmar, *Opp.*, 1645, ii. p. 805), of Charles the Bald (875), of Charles the Fat (888), of St. Brandan in the eleventh century (Wright, *Life of St. B.*), and that known as

St. Patrick's Purgatory in the twelfth (the narrator being a monk named Owen), which obtained a wide-spread popularity throughout Europe (Wright's *St. Patrick's Purgatory*), that of the descent of St. Paul into Hell (given in full by *Ozan.*), of Walkelin (*Order. Vit.*, viii. 17), and lastly, that of the boy Alberic of Monte Cassino in the early part of the twelfth century. Nearer to Dante's time are those of Matilda (Mechthild), of Helfta, near Eisleben, in a book bearing the title of the *Effluent Light of the Godhead* (1250–1270), or of another Matilda, Abbess of Hackeborn, of the same convent (*d.* 1292), who wrote a book on *Spiritual Graces* (Boehmer in *D. Gesell.*, iii. pp. 101–178; Lubin, pp. 325–352). Lastly, Dante's own master, Brunetto Latini, in his *Tesoretto* begins, as Dante does, with describing how he was lost in a forest, and then was led on by Ptolemy the astronomer to see a vision of the Unseen World and the punishments of evil-doers (Delius in *D. Gesell.*, iv. p. 23).

Readers of the books, or parts of books, or treatises to which I have referred (those of St. Brandan, St. Patrick, Walkelin, Alberic, are to be found in the notes to Longfellow's *Dante*), will find that in each case there are sufficiently striking parallelisms with the *Commedia* to render the hypothesis that Dante was acquainted with this or that vision more or less tenable, even perhaps to make it seem to the writer who maintains the hypothesis absolutely invulnerable. I cannot say that I estimate the amount of Dante's indebtedness to any one of them at any large measure. Parallelisms almost as striking are to be found in writings that were altogether outside the horizon of his studies, in the Edda, in the Anglo-Saxon poem of the Phœnix (both given by Longfellow), even in the Mahabharata and the Koran (quoted by Labitte). It is, of course, almost beyond a doubt that Dante must

have read the *Tesoretto.* It is probable, as I have suggested elsewhere, that he may have seen the MS. of Alberic's vision at Monte Cassino. The *Tophet and Eden* of the Jewish poet, Immanuel of Rome, may have been known to him when he was at Rome. But, as the number of the supposed *origines* indicates, visions of this kind were floating in the air throughout the whole of mediæval Europe from the sixth century onwards. They were embodied in the architecture of French cathedrals which Dante may, or may not, have seen, in the Triumph of Christ in the frescoes of the crypt of that of Auxerre, in the west rose-window of that of Chartres, in the west front of that of Autun, in the porch of Conques, in Notre Dame at Paris. Labitte (*ut supra*, p. 736) states, as the result of his researches, that the architecture of France alone supplies not less than fifty illustrations of the *Commedia* by way of anticipation. The mysteries and miracle-plays which were common throughout Europe naturally tended, especially those that dealt with the Descent into Hell, to representations of a like nature (Warton, *H. E. P.* ii. pp. 19, 20). The performance on the Ponte alla Carraia, which had so disastrous an issue in May 1304, with its scenes of Hell and its figures of demons and damned souls, though it was new at Florence (*Vill.* viii. 70), was probably a reproduction of what had been seen elsewhere, and was obviously exhibited in entire independence of Dante's work in the *Commedia.*

On the whole, therefore, I am led to the conclusion that there is no ground for imputing anything like deliberate plagiarism to Dante in this matter, or even for assuming, to any considerable extent, a conscious reproduction. His position is simply that of one who, like all great poets, is the heir of the ages that

have preceded him. The supreme artificer uses all materials that he finds ready to hand. Whatever was grotesque, horrible, or foul in the mediæval conceptions of the Unseen World, no less than what was pure, bright, transcendent in its beauty, was likely to find its way into his treasure-house of things new and old, and to be used by him in the spirit of his own, and not of a later, generation.

"PURGATORY"

I BEGIN, as before, with the time-limits within which we may assume—assuming also, as is at least probable, that the author finished one part before he began another—that the second Cantique of the great work was written. This would lead us to start with 1309, about the time when the Ilarian letter tells us that Dante, then on his way to some country beyond the Alps, dedicated the *Inferno* to Uguccione della Faggiuola, and left the MS. with the monk of Santa Croce del Corvo. The latest notes of time in the *Purgatorio* are the references (1) to the persecution of the Templars by Philip the Fair (*Purg.* xx. 91–93), which began in 1312; (2) to the transfer of the Papal Court from Rome to Avignon (*Purg.* xxxii. 160) in 1312; (3) possibly to Henry VII., as the destined instrument of Providence in the restoration of the true Empire, and therefore at least to the beginning of his Italian expedition in the autumn of 1311 (*Purg.* xxxiii. 43). Assuming C. vi. 100–102 to be a prophecy *ex eventu*, we may, without risk of error, connect the earlier Cantos of this second part of the *Commedia* with a date subsequent to the death of the Emperor Albert in 1308. In C. viii. 121–139

we have in like manner a distinct reference to the hospitality which the poet received at the hands of Moroello Malaspina in 1307–9. I do not find in the *Purgatorio*, as I find in the *Paradiso*, any direct reference to the ultimate failure of Henry's expedition, or to the change of policy on the part of Clement V., which, from Dante's point of view, contributed to that failure (*Par.* xvii. 82, xxx. 136), and therefore I infer that it was finished when the poet's mind was still flushed with bright hopes for himself and for Italy, when he persuaded himself, as in his Letter to the Princes and Cities of Italy, that all but a worthless few would receive the new Emperor as the anointed of the Lord. The date of that letter is fixed by experts in the winter of 1310–11; the date of Henry's death was August 21, 1313. I am led accordingly to the conclusion that the *Purgatorio* was the most rapidly written of all the three Cantiques, and that the period of its composition embraces the years 1308–12, in which Dante was watching with hope the election of Henry VII. to the Imperial throne and the preparations for his Italian expedition. The fulness of hope with which the *Purgatorio* ends forbids the thought that he had reached the point when the bitterness of hope deferred pierced his soul. On the other hand, the allusion to the "crown and mitre" in *Purg.* xxvii. 142 makes it probable that that Canto was written after the Emperor's coronation in the Church of St. John Lateran on June 29, 1312. There is, I think, much in the structure and tone of the *Purgatorio* which falls in with this hypothesis. There are fewer oscillations of spirit in it than in the *Inferno*. There is none of the grim humour which startles and almost offends us in the demon scenes of the Malebolge. We breathe throughout a purer and clearer air, and the poet's delight in all beauties of

nature and of art, in the glories of the dawn and sunset and the starry sky, in memories of sweet music, in the creations of the painter and the sculptor, is full and overflowing. It may well be that it was his recollection of that time of hope for himself, for Italy, and for mankind which led Dante afterwards to say of himself that there was no child of the Church Militant that had wider and brighter hopes than he had (*Par.* xxv. 52). The vision of Sordello and the Valley of the Kings (*Purg.* vi. vii.) receives on this hypothesis as it receives on no other, an explanation which brings out its full significance. The poet has heard of the Emperor Albert's death; he has entered, probably, on the negotiations which ended in the election of Henry VII. as his successor. He will tell that successor of the claims which Italy has on him, and warn him of the peril of neglecting them. The factions of Verona, and Orvieto, and Florence; the desolation of Rome, the widowed city, mourning over the absence of her lord; the state of the country as a whole, drifting in the storm, like a ship without a pilot—all these are brought by him before the eyes of the new Emperor, and he is told, above all things, not to follow in the footsteps of Rodolph and Albert in leaving Italy to itself. Significant hints are thrown out, whether for Henry of Luxemburg or another, as to the alliances which it will be wise for him to form. He is warned once and again against the treacherous, subtle, and unscrupulous greed of gain which he would find in Philip the Fair (*Purg.* vii. 109, xxxii. 155). He is advised to seek the alliance of Edward II. of England (*Purg.* vii. 132),[1] the grandson of a saintly father, rather than to lean on the broken reed of

[1] Edward I. died in July 1307. The term "branches" seems purposely chosen to take in his successor, whose degeneracy was not as yet manifested to the world.

France. Dante writes of the politics of Europe as favourite prophet, Jeremiah (*H.* i. 32, *n.*), had done of the politics of Judah, Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt. Sordello—loved and admired on other grounds as a poet—rises into a new prominence, because he too had passed his judgment on the kings and princes of Europe with a bold and unshrinking severity (*Purg.* vi. 58, *n.*). The reference to the promptness of Cæsar's action (*Purg.* xviii. 101) gains a fresh suggestiveness, when we think of it as a hint to the newly elected Emperor that it will be well for him too to avoid procrastination, and not to let "I dare not" wait upon "I would."

The traces of the poet's studies in the *Purgatorio* confirm the conclusion to which we have been led by his notices of contemporary history. Aristotle and Boethius fall into the background, and the teaching of the Church is brought into a new prominence. That teaching is, however, such as would be found in the Missal and other office-books of the Church, and in popular manuals of devotion, rather than that of the great scholastic theologians. As yet there are few, if any, traces that Dante had studied Aquinas or Bernard, or Hugo, or Richard of St. Victor. The classification of sins is no longer that of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as interpreted by Averrhoes, as in *H.* xi. 80–84, *n.*, and the seven *Peccata* from which the pilgrim is to be cleansed are those which were the basis, as in Chaucer's *Persone's Tale*, of the penitential discipline of the Church (*Purg.* ix. 112). The Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount which greet the pilgrim at each successive stage of his purification from those sins, the numerous examples from the history of the Old and New Testaments, David and Michal, and Stephen, and the Maccabees, and the woman of Samaria, and the Blessed Virgin

in all her manifold graces, the paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer in *Purg.* xi. 1–21, all speak of the closer study of the Vulgate which marked this period, as contrasted with that of the *Inferno* and the *Convito.* He caught eagerly, as I have shown when speaking of Dante as an interpreter of Scripture, at the fourfold method of exegesis, which was so congenial to his subtle and imaginative intellect. The frequent quotations from, or allusions to, the hymns of the Latin Church show that the Missal and other offices of the Church were his constant companions, that the psalms and hymns and anthems of the season, of which we have seen reason to think as the period of the great crisis of his life, were especially dear to him.[1] And not the words only of those psalms and hymns. More than ever—more even than in the days when his own Canzoni and other poems were set to music by Casella (*Purg.* ii. 91), the poet's soul was open to the sweet influences of harmony; and the solemn peal of the organs of Italian cathedrals (*Purg.* ix. 144), or the evening chimes of the Ave Maria of less conspicuous churches (*Purg.* viii. 1–6), at once woke in him tender reminiscences of the past, and reproduced themselves in the new grandeur and melody of his own resounding lines.

I have endeavoured in a paper in the *Contemporary Review* for September 1884 to indicate the value of the autobiographical element which is interwoven with the whole texture of the *Purgatorio.* The limits within which I must now confine myself do not allow of the same latitude of quotation which I was able to claim then, and, as the passages are now in the reader's hands, such a latitude is not needed; but I

[1] Compare *Purg.* ii 46 *n.*, v. 24, vii. 83, viii. 13 *n.*, ix. 140, xvi. 19, xxi. 136, xxiii. 11, xxv. 121, xxviii. 80, xxix. 3, 51, xxx. 11, 10, 83, xxxi. 98, xxxiii. 1.

avail myself of this opportunity to reproduce from that article what seem to me its most salient points.

"It has seemed to me, as I have read the *Purgatorio*, that in it, far more than in the *Inferno* or the *Paradiso*, the man Dante Alighieri reveals himself to us in all the distinctness of his personality; that the poem is essentially autobiographical. It is something more than a polemic against the crimes of the Roman Curia or the factions of Florence; something more than the summing up of the creed of Mediæval Christendom, or the veiled symbolism of a new and mystic heresy destructive of that creed. In the *Inferno* he passes on stern and ruthless, condemning sins which were not his, hardly touched, except in the Francesca story, with the thought of the pity of it all. In the *Paradiso* he paints a blessedness to which he has not attained, on which he gazes as from a far-off distance, which he can but dimly apprehend. But in the *Purgatorio* he is with those who are not only of like passions with himself, but are passing through a like stage of moral and spiritual experience. The seer paints the process of the purification of his own soul from the seven deadly sins that had eaten into his life. We might almost speak of this section of his poem as the 'Confessions of Dante Alighieri.'

"We have scarcely entered on the threshold of the Cantique before this essentially self-scrutinising analysis meets us. At first, indeed, his soul, as if in the full delight of its escape from the darkness of the pit, exults in its recovered freedom, in its old joy, in itself a purifying joy, in light and the fresh breeze of dawn (*Purg*. i. 1–18). If we would understand the opening of the *Purgatorio*, we must go back to the Stygian waters of the nether world, wherein were plunged by a righteous Nemesis the souls of those

who, in the sullenness of their discontent, had lost the capacity of entering into that joy (*H.* vii. 115–124). Of that sullen discontent Dante had not been guilty, even under the heavy burdens of poverty and exile, and therefore he had not lost the capacity for hope which was denied to those who dwelt in the dolorous city (*H.* iii. 9). And so, when he has left the region where 'silent is the sun' (*H.* i. 60), and can once more 'look upon the stars' (*H.* xxxiv. 139), his spirit exults in its liberation (*Purg.* i. 1–6). Nowhere in the whole poem, one might almost say in all poetry, is the brightness of that dawn, at once of the earthly and the heavenly morning, more beautifully painted (*Purg.* i. 13–20); or once again in that marvellous picture of the trembling of the illumined sea (*Purg.* i. 115–117), of which it is hard to say whether it excels most in beauty or in truth.

"But not the less in the midst of this natural joy is there the thought present to the poet's mind that he is entering on a solemn work; that it is he himself, his own soul, that needs the cleansing which he is about to describe. Bearing that thought in mind, we shall be able to follow his course through the seven circles of the Mount of Purification with a clearer insight, to note what were the sins which weighed most heavily on his conscience, what were the healing remedies which he had found most effective against them. I start with the words in which Virgil, as the poet's guide, sets forth to Cato, who, as the representative of the natural virtues of which the four stars that cast their light upon his face are symbols, is the guardian of the entrance to Purgatory, the errand on which they had come (*Purg.* i. 58–72).

"As we advance we note a more distinct confession. Dante is conscious of the over-sensitiveness which makes him keenly alive to men's looks of wonder or

their words of scorn, as the souls in the vestibule of Purgatory gazed on him, marvelling that his form, unlike theirs, casts a shadow (*Purg.* v. 7–21). A little farther on and we find a like weakness, of which that sensitiveness was the natural outcome. He is in the circle of souls whose pride of life is chastened by the bowed-down prostration of an enforced lowliness, which he describes fully (*Purg.* x. 130–140). One of these, Omberto of Santafiore, tells him his name and his sin, how that he had been so lifted up by his pride of birth that he scorned all his fellow men, and Dante, as he listens, as if conscience pricked him, bowed his head as if to hide his shame (*Purg.* xi. 61–73). In another of these he recognises the painter Oderisi of Gubbio, who, in like manner, confesses that he had so gloried in his heart as to speak contemptuously of all his rivals. And then he moralises on the transitoriness of human fame in words which touched at once the poet himself, and two at least of his dearest friends, Giotto and Guido Cavalcanti. The one had supplanted Cimabue in popular esteem; the other had taken the place once occupied by Guido Guinicelli. It might, perchance, be that one then living (possibly Dante means himself) should surpass them both. All fame was transitory, and the conscience of the seer makes answer that he had learnt a lesson that brought low his pride (*Purg.* xi. 79–119). He does not, however, indulge in indiscriminate self-accusation. He passes into the circle where souls are purified from the sin of envy by being for a time blinded. They had looked, as with an evil eye, on the good fortune of others, and this was their righteous chastisement. To that fault Dante does not plead guilty, as he did in the case of pride. From that special form of evil he can say with a good conscience that he had been almost, if not altogether, free (*Purg.* xiii. 133–138).

"But the supreme confession of unworthiness comes, as it was meet it should do, when the poet stands, after he has passed through the cleansing fire, face to face with his transfigured and glorified Beatrice. He sees her, at first, clothed in a green mantle, and with a snow-white olive-bordered veil; and though as yet he sees not her face, the intuitive consciousness of the presence of her who was at once beautiful and terrible in her purity filled him at first, as it had filled him in his boyhood (*V. N.* c. 2), with an overpowering awe, which made him look for help to the poet who had so far been his guide (*Purg.* xxx. 43–48). But Virgil was there no longer. Human guidance, the teaching of the wise, the traditions of a venerable past, these had done their work, and he finds himself face to face with her whom he had loved as a woman with an absorbing and passionate devotion, and who now met him on her chariot of glory as the embodied form of Heavenly Wisdom, the transfigured and glorified conscience of humanity. He stood awe-stricken, and the bitter tears flowed fast and cleansed his cheeks, and then a voice came from her which thrilled the abysmal depths of personality. 'Dante,' it said—it is the one solitary passage in the whole poem in which the poet names himself:—

'Dante, weep not because thy Virgil's gone·
Weep not as yet, as yet weep thou no more;
For other sword-wounds must thy tears flow down.'
—*Purg.* xxx. 55–57.

He turns to look on her, and sees her 'queen-like in look and gesture, yet severe.' He hears her words of reproof and gazes on his own form imaged in the waters, and, as he can bear neither vision, stands with eyes cast down upon the grass, like a guilty child in the presence of its mother (*Purg.* xxx. 64–81). Tears ceased to flow, and the poet felt as if his heart was

frost-bound, as are the Apennines when the snow lies heavy on the trees. The healing came from the angelic ministers who accompanied Beatrice. They sang their anthem of *In Te, Domine, speravi*, and his soul knew once more the relief of tears (*Purg.* xxx. 91–99). But the stern work of the illumined conscience which Beatrice represents has yet to be done, and she reproves her over-pitiful attendants (*Purg.* xxx. 103–108). She presses on him the remembrance of his early days, naming the very book, the *Vita Nuova*, which he had consecrated to his reverential love for her, and reminds him of all the promise and potency of good and all the actualities of evil which had characterised his youth (*Purg.* xxx. 115–145). This was terrible enough. It was, as it were, Dante's anticipation of the time when the books shall be opened, and the things done in the body shall be made manifest to Christ and to His angels. But this was not all. The voice of the Judge, which is also the voice of the Beloved—for Beatrice unites both characters—must say to the accused, as Nathan said to David, 'Thou art the man.' The sinner must confess his sin as David confessed it: 'Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.' Question after question is pressed home upon him, till at last there comes the confession which Beatrice sought for as the condition of forgiveness:—

> 'The things that present were
> With their false pleasure led my steps aside,
> Soon as thy face was hidden from me there.'
>
> —*Purg.* xxxi 34–36.

Confession brings, as ever, the sense of pardon and absolution, but the soul's wounds need the oil and the wine that heal, and reproof and warning are needed for the coming years, lest they should reproduce the

failures of the past, till the poet stands once again like 'a little child, dumb from shame of heart' (*Purg.* xxxi. 64). The close of that wonderful scene which restores to the sinner his lost purity and peace will meet us at a later stage. We are dealing now, not with the full completion of the process of restoration, but with the confession which was its antecedent and condition. It may well be asked whether the whole range of literature presents anything more intensely autobiographical? We read it in its dramatic form, which half veils from us its marvellous reality; but we have to remember that it was Dante's pen that wrote it all; that it was the man, proud, reserved, reticent, craving for the praise of his fellows and sensitive to their censure, that thus laid bare the secrets of his soul. The reproofs of Beatrice are, as I have said, those of his own illumined and transfigured conscience. The *Purgatorio* takes its place, in spite of all differences of form and character, side by side with the *Confessions* of Augustine. One who has entered into its meaning will at least have learnt one lesson. He will have felt the power of Dante's intense truthfulness. The theories which see in the *Commedia*, from first to last, the symbolic cypher of a crypto-heresy, the writings of a man in a mask, veiling a pantheistic licence under the garb of a scholastic theology, will seem absolutely incredible.

"Starting from the point thus gained, we may venture, without undue boldness, to trace in the cleansing processes which he describes as seen on the Mount of Purification the record of what he had found purifying and healing in its influence upon his own soul.

"Of his joy in the serene beauties of light and sky I have already spoken as one of those influences. It is worth while to note how often he returns in the *Purgatorio* to descriptions of a like character, some-

times in their purely natural character, more often in connection with the tender human memories which are associated with them. So, while he still stands by the sea on which he had seen the light trembling on the waters, he notes the change of hue that dawn brought with it (*Purg.* ii. 5–15). Light is the condition of the purifying process (*Purg.* vii. 43–45). A sense of peace comes over him as he rests in the fair valley which is painted with a jewelled beauty that reminds us of Fra Angelico (*Purg.* vii. 73–81). Eventide with its vesper chimes awakens a rush of tender memories of the friendships of the past (*Purg.* viii. 1–6). The slumber of the night that follows is succeeded by another dawn, and so 'day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge' (*Ps.* xix. 2), and he feels that that is the hour when the soul looks into the unseen world with clearer vision (*Purg.* ix. 1–18). The light of the visible sun becomes a parable of the Sun of Truth and Righteousness (*Purg.* xiii. 16–21).[1] It is a matter of self-reproach that men are so deaf to the witness of the 'beauteous orbs eterne' that illumine the firmament of heaven (*Purg.* xiv. 148–150). Sweet memories of spring breathe their balmy healing on his soul (*Purg.* xxiv. 145–150). The supreme witness to the therapeutic power of Nature on the eye that has been purged and opened is found in the parting words with which Virgil leaves the disciple who no longer needs his guidance, and in the new abounding joy with which that disciple yields himself to its influence, all the more suggestive from the intermingling with that imagined ideal of what might be in the soul's future, of the memories which sprang from his own solitary walks in

1 The thought belongs in itself to one of the most universal parables of Nature, but it may have come to Dante through the well-known *Hymn to the Sun* by St. Francis of Assisi (Sir J. Stephen's *Essays in Eccles. Biog.*, p. 94, ed 1867).

the pine-woods of Ravenna (*Purg.* xxvii. 124–142, xxviii. 1–21).

"But, side by side with this yielding of the soul, as with the openness of a renewed childhood, in the very spirit of Wordsworth, to the teaching of nature, the voices of the silent stars, the whisperings of the winds, the music of the waters, the beauty of the hills and woods, the *Purgatorio* describes other processes, each of them suggestive of an experience through which Dante himself had passed, and of an insight into the hygiene and therapeutics of the soul gained by that experience. One of these meets us on the very threshold. The Master and the Scholar, Virgil and Dante, have asked for guidance. How is the latter to qualify himself for the ascent of the Mount of Purification, which is untrodden ground to the former? And the answer comes from Cato, as the representative of natural ethics, symbolised in the four stars (justice, fortitude, temperance, prudence) that cast their light on his face, pointing to something beyond their reach. In obedience to that answer (*Purg.* i. 94–99), the pilgrim girds himself with the rush which was to be the symbol, not of the strength and vigour on which men look as conditions of success in their great enterprises—intellectual, moral, spiritual—but of the humility which ceases from self-assertion, and yields itself to the chastisements which God appoints for it, and is content with a low estate, and seeks not great things for itself. Whatever we may think of the tradition that Dante had at one time enrolled himself as a member of the Tertiary Order of St. Francis, this passage at least indicates that he had grasped in its completeness the idea of that 'cord of lowliness' which was one of the outward badges of the Brotherhood of Francis of Assisi. The rush-girdle took the place of that which had been thrown

to Geryon, as having proved itself of no power in conflict with the leopard, that was the symbol of sensual sin (*H.* xvi. 106–112)."

That other process of the cleansing of his face from the smoky grime of the *Inferno* is hardly less significant in its symbolism. Contact with evil, even with the righteous Nemesis that falls on evil, is, as I have already pointed out, not without its perils. The man catches something of the taint of the vices on which he looks. He is infected with the *bassa voglia*, which lingers as it listens to the revilings of the base (*H.* xxx. 148, *n.*). He becomes hard and relentless as he passes among those who have perished in their hatred. He looks on the sufferings of the lost, not only with awe and dread, but with a Tertullian-like ferocity of exultation. Before the work of purification can begin, before he can prepare himself to meet the gaze of the angel-warder of Purgatory, he must be cleansed from the blackness of the pit. The eye cannot see clearly the beauty, outward or spiritual, which is to work out its restoration to humanity and holiness until its memories of the abyss are made less keen and virulent. And when that process begins, and the pilgrim has at last arrived at the gates of Purgatory, the symbolism becomes yet richer and more suggestive. Dante had dreamt that he had been borne upward, as on eagle's wings, into a region terrible in its brightness (*Purg.* ix. 31–33). But the dream has its interpretation, and its message is, that he has at last reached the gates of Purgatory; and that the purifying process may begin. He has been transported thither in that ecstasy of his morning slumber by Lucia, at once the Syracusan saint in whose church at Florence he may have worshipped, to whom he may have turned in the simplicity of his youthful faith as prevailing to help him when blindness threatened to place him, as it

placed Milton, in the list of the great poets who had suffered under a like privation—

> "Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old,
> Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides":

and one who was for him, in the after-thoughts of maturer life, when he had learnt to transfigure all his early memories, the symbol of heavenly illumination (*H.* ii. 97, *n.*). That diviner insight was needed for what was to follow. Sitting on the topmost of three steps of varied hue, he sees the angel of Purgatory with a face of transcendent brightness, and bearing in his hand a naked sword, dazzling in its brightness—the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The first of the steps is of white marble, which mirrors all his features. *There* is the self-knowledge which sees itself in the mirror of the Divine Word. The second of stone, nearly black, rough and coarse and cracked. *There* is the rough sternness of mortification, in all its contrast to the softness of the self-indulgence in which the natural man delights. The third is of fiery porphyry, crimson like blood. *There* is the glow of burning love, not without a latent hint of the supreme instance of that love in the blood that flowed from hands and feet and wounded side upon the cross.

These were the steps that had to be surmounted before the pilgrim could enter on his steep ascent, and then, passing these, he smites his breast, as did the Publican, and then the angelic warder, with the point of his sword, marks the seven P's upon his brow, and the gates are opened with the gold and silver keys of Absolution and of Counsel.

Yes, the seven P's of the seven *Peccata*, the mortal sins of the popular ethics of Mediæval Christendom, are all thus traced upon the poet's forehead; for in

him, as in all of us, there were the possibilities, even the actualities, of all. He might be conscious, as we have seen in the instances of Pride and Envy, of one form of evil as more dominant in him than another, of its being, as we say, his "besetting" sin; but not the less did he need to pass through each successive stage in the great ascent, and to experience the working of all that was most potent to heal and deliver from the sin which was purged in each several stage of the ascent.

It is every way characteristic both of the man and of his time that so large a share in that healing work should be assigned to music, and that the music of the Church. He may possibly have studied—he certainly shared—the visions of the great English Franciscan thinker, Roger Bacon, between whose writings and his own there are so many points of parallelism[1] as to the regenerating and purifying power of sacred psalmody. He had known, as Hooker, Milton, J. H. Newman knew, how it could soothe the troubles and attune the discords of the soul; how, when married to immortal verse, it could give them wings, like those of Ezekiel's vision (*Ezek.* i. 9), that made them fit vehicles for the utterance of divinest mysteries. Shall we be wrong in thinking that here also we have in the *Purgatorio* an autobiographical element, reminiscences of hours when, in the Abbey of Florence, or the Franciscan church of Santa Croce, or his own "beloved St. John's" (*H.* xix. 7), or elsewhere, in cathedral or monastery, he had new thoughts of penitence and pardon, of high resolves and aspirations after holiness?

[1] "*Mira enim musicæ super omnes scientias est et spectanda potestas. . . . Mores enim reformat, ebrietates sanat, infirmitates curat, sanitatem conservat, quietem somni inducit.*" If we did but know the inner secrets of the art, brutes would be tamed by its subtle power. "*Similiter et hominum animi in quemlibet gratiam devotionis raperentur, et in plenum cujuslibet virtutis amorem excitarentur, et in omnem sanitatem et vigorem.*" (*Op. Tert.* c. 73.)

Let us examine some, at least, of these instances by way of an induction. He is still on the shore of the sea in the waters of which he had laved his face and had seen the angel's boat bearing more than a hundred souls, and they were all chanting as with one voice *In exitu Israel de Ægypto.* That was the fit opening hymn of this "pilgrim's progress." After the fashion of his time, Dante had read into it a deeper meaning than seemed to lie on the surface. It spoke to him of the deliverance of the Israel of God from another house of bondage than that of the literal Egypt. When he notes, as with special care, that they did not stop at these opening words, but went on to "all the psalm doth afterward unfold" (*Purg.* ii. 46–48), we feel that that mystical interpretation had guided his thoughts to its closing words, and that for him—the wanderer in a desert land, thirsting after righteousness—it bore its witness of the Power that could turn "the hard rock into a standing water, and the flint stone into a springing well." In what follows there is something yet more intensely personal. Among those newly arrived souls was that of Casella, whose meeting with his former friend in "the milder shades of Purgatory" Milton's sonnet has made familiar to us all. Time and death have not changed the old affection. After the vain embrace of the shadow of the one with the mortal body of the other, after the recognition which revives the memories of past days, the poet prays that his friend will yet put forth his power and skill in song to soothe him as of old (*Purg.* ii. 106–114). It is, I think, impossible not to recognise in this something more than the memory of the pleasant days of youthful friendship. There is the distinct recognition of the fact that the mysterious, religious, purifying power of music is not limited to that which we commonly call "sacred"; that a "song

of love," such as *Canzone* xv., may touch that which is most essentially spiritual in us, and may stir up thoughts that lie too deep for tears. This, however, stands as a solitary episode, the exception which proves the rule, and the rule was that it was not from minstrels or troubadours, Provençal or Italian, but from the singers and choristers of the Church that Dante had heard the melodies which chased away the evil phantasms of his soul. So, as he advances, he hears other souls sing their *Miserere* of penitence (*Purg.* v. 24). So, as the gates are unlocked with the gold and silver keys, sweet voices, mingled with organ-thunders, chant the *Te Deum* (*Purg.* ix. 139–145). But chiefest in its power, and therefore worthy of fuller reproduction, was the prayer which men learn in childhood at their mother's knees, and which retains its power to utter the soul's wants to extremest age (*Purg.* xi. 1–24). What follows is given, as before, more in the way of brief and suggestive hints. Each beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount becomes a separate anthem, greeting the pilgrim as he passes from one circle to another. And with these there mingle manifold utterances of the anthem character, the *Agnus Dei* (*Purg.* xvi. 19), the *Adhæsit pavimento* (*Purg.* xix. 73), the *Gloria in Excelsis* (*Purg.* xx. 136), the *Labia mea, Domine* (*Purg.* xxiii. 11), and the *Summæ Deus Clementiæ* (*Purg.* xxv. 121), and the *Venite, benedicti Patris mei* (*Purg.* xxvii. 58). Finally, with that last music ringing in his ears, he passes through the wall of fire which cleanses him from what yet remained of the tendency to fleshly sin, and therefore parted him from the vision of the glorified Beatrice (*Purg.* xxvii. 49–60). And he enters on the earthly Paradise, where by night the stars are larger than their wont, and where, when the day dawns, he sees the stream, at once dark and crystal clear, and

the fair lady, afterwards named as Matilda, in whom, amid all their hypotheses as to her historical identification, well-nigh all interpreters have seen the representative of active, as distinct from contemplative, holiness. Her hands are full of flowers, and her eyes are bright with the brightness of a benign and sympathising love. That he may understand what he sees, she bids him remember the psalm (*Ps.* xcii.), of which he gives but the keynote word, but of which at least one whole verse must have been present to his thoughts—

> "*Quia delectasti me, Domine, in facturâ Tuâ,*
> *Et in operibus manuum Tuarum exultabo.*"

Here was the supreme sanction for man's delight in the works of God, for the witness borne by all forms of visible beauty to that which is invisible and eternal. It is significant that she reveals, after she has told of the mystic rivers which the pilgrim still has to pass, the secret of this full capacity, and finds it in the anthem words of another psalm, "*Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata*" (*Ps.* xxxii. 1). Only those who have the peace of pardon are so far at leisure from themselves as to have the capacity for that enjoyment of the works of God (*Purg.* xxiv. 3, xxviii. 80). I pass over the vision that follows, as being more deliberately symbolic, and therefore showing rather the skill of the apocalyptic artist than the personality of the man, but the immediate prelude to the revelation of the glorified Beatrice as the impersonation of the Eternal Wisdom is again distinctly personal, as blending together the two influences of natural beauty and sacred song, of which I have already spoken. In that apocalypse, apparently from the lips of the Seer of Patmos, he hears a voice of power, "*Veni, Sponsa de Libano,*" and with it, strangely blending, as is

Dante's wont, scriptural and classical memories, Alleluias, and "*Benedictus es qui venis*," and "*Manibus O date lilia plenis*" (*Æn.* vi. 884; *Purg.* xxx. 11–21). These herald-songs that meet the ear have their counterpart in what meets the eye. There is a vision as of the clear shining of an Easter dawn when the sun emerges from its cloudy tent (*Purg.* xxx. 10–27). And then there comes the final revelation of Beatrice, Madonna-like in her beauty, and arrayed in the symbolic colours, the white, green, and crimson, with which early Italian art clothed its ideal of that Madonna (*Purg.* xxx. 28–33). Of that meeting, as far as it belonged to Dante's confession, I have already spoken. It remains, however, to note the significance of the place which it occupies in the long process of purification. It is not till the soul has been cleansed from its last baseness, and conquered its last besetting sin, and passed through the agonising fire, that it learns to comprehend fully the root-evil of which the seven deadly sins were but the manifold outgrowth. Then, at last, it sees that there had been throughout an unfaithfulness to God. Disloyalty to her who had first wakened in him the sense of a higher life, of an eternal good, had been disloyalty to Him who, through her, had sought to lead him to Himself. When that confession has been made, then, and not till then, the time has come for the baptism of a new regeneration, in what for him is as the passage of a new Jordan (*Purg.* xxxi. 91–105). The river which he thus crossed was none other than the stream of Lethe, which Dante, with a profound insight, though in defiance of all Christian tradition, thus places as all but the final stage of purification. He had felt, as all souls that have passed through the crisis of conversion have felt, that what is needed for the soul is that its memory may be cleansed from all the evil of the past; that as

God "blots out as a thick cloud its transgressions, and as a cloud its sins" (*Iasi.* xliv. 22), so it too may forget the past, or remember it only as belonging to an alien and a vanished self.[1] That cleansing of the conscience as with the blood of sprinkling, so that it becomes white as snow, makes the vision of the Eternal Truth no longer overwhelming, for it is coupled with the vision of the Christ, as the Gryphon of the mystic symbolism, in His divine and human unity (*Purg.* xxxi. 121–145). The power of that vision of the truth, falling short only of the ineffably beatific vision of the Divine glory (here also with special stress laid on the humanity that was joined with the Eternal Word), which ends the *Paradiso*, as this all but ends the *Purgatorio*, to complete the work of Lethe in blotting out the memory of the evil past, is indicated by a touch of the skill of the supreme artist. Beatrice unfolds to him an apocalypse of the past and future of the Church and the Empire, which is to correct his former theories.

> "That thou may'st know, she said, how stands that school,
> Which thou hast followed, and its doctrines scan,
> And learn how far it follows my true rule"

And then, unconscious of reproach, the very confessions which had just passed from his lips remembered no more, he makes his reply :—

> "And then I answered, 'Memory writes not here
> That I have e'er estranged myself from thee,
> Nor doth my conscience wake remorseful fear'"
>
> —*Purg.* xxxiii. 85–93.

Well may Beatrice tell him that his Lethe-draught has been free and full, and feel that the time has come for it to be followed by that from the other mystic

[1] The stress which Dante laid on this thought is seen in the fact that he returns to it again in the case of Cunizza (*Par.* ix. 103–105).

river—absolutely the pure creation of the poet's mind, which revives the memory of every good deed done, and so, completing the transformation wrought out by Lethe, gives to the new man, the true self, the continuity of life which had seemed before to belong to the old, the false and evil, self.[1] I do not inquire how far such a philosophy of consciousness is tenable in itself, or may be reconciled with acknowledged truths in ethics or theology; but it will be admitted that there is a transcendent greatness in its very conception which places Dante high among the spiritual teachers of mankind. One who could picture that state to himself as the completion of his pilgrimage, the perfected result of the regenerate life begun in baptism, must at least have had some foretaste of ecstatic rapture, of communion with the Eternal Wisdom, and of the infinite goodness which had convinced him of its possibility; and so the closing lines of the *Purgatorio* have definitely the autobiographical element which I have endeavoured to trace as permeating the whole of this part of the *Commedia* (*Purg.* xxxiii. 110–145). Of other portions of the purifying process I must be content to speak more briefly. There are the sculptures on wall and ground in C. x. and xii., which represent respectively the examples of lowliness and of rebellious pride, and in which we find the artist-poet's conception of the function of art as a teacher of mankind, presenting vividly to the eye what, left to the words of the historian, was likely to fall on dull and apathetic ears. Such lessons he might have learnt himself in the Giotto frescoes of the Arena Chapel at Padua or in those of the church of Assisi. More definitely he may have had in his mind the bas-reliefs of Niccoli and Giovanni Pisano, and the pupils

[1] The thought which the symbolism suggests may possibly be traced to the words of *Matt.* xxv. 34–40, perhaps also to *John* iii 21.

of the former, Lapo and Arnolfo (*Linds.* i. pp. 357–371), or the paintings and sculptures with which Can Grande was said to have adorned his palace at Verona, so that each guest might find in his room what was appropriate to his character and calling. Scarcely less suggestive is the part which he assigns in the work of purification, not to the formal teaching of history, sacred or secular, but to the words which come into men's minds, as it were, by chance, brought as "by airy tongues that syllable men's names." These also, as in the instance of the "*Virum non cognosco*" (*Purg.* xxv. 128), the "*Vinum non habent*" (*Purg.* xiii. 29), the "Whoever findeth me shall slay me" (*Purg.* xiv. 133), may come, as germs of future thoughts, "winged words," as seeds are winged, that they may float to their proper soil, and take root downward and bear fruit upward.

From first to last, however, as we see these processes of the soul's cleansing, the question is forced upon us, how was it that Dante's thoughts of Purgatory were so different from those which were at least fostered by ecclesiastical tradition? Though the great theologians of the schools had shrunk from defining a matter lying so largely in the region of the unknown, the dominant opinion was that there was one and the same fire for both Hell and Purgatory, the difference between them being one of duration only; that Hell and Purgatory were therefore in the same region, divided only as by a middle wall of partition. That thought embodied itself in the popular representations of the souls in the flames of Purgatory.[1] It was stamped on the minds of men throughout one region of Europe by the name of *Fegefeuer* for the purgatorial process. Even in the picture drawn by Dante's great master, the souls that are capable of

[1] *E g*, the sculpture over the gateway of All Souls College, Oxford.

purification are seen in the same region as those that endure an everlasting punishment (*Æn.* vi. 735–747). In the *Vision of Alberic* those souls are for a time tormented in an extensive plain covered with thorns and brambles, till at last they escape into a very pleasant field filled with purified souls, where their torn members and garments are immediately restored (Wright's *St. Patr. Purg.* p. 118).

Among the floating legends of the time there was indeed one which may have suggested Dante's treatment of the subject-matter of his second Cantique. In the story of St. Brandan (Wright's *Life of St. Brandan*), an abbot who comes to visit him tells him how he and his companions, moved by strange reports he had heard from a brother abbot, sailed for forty days and forty nights due east, and then for three days and nights due west, and then they came to "a fair island full of flowers, herbs, and trees," and the birds, who were angels that had joined Lucifer in his rebellion, but were not shut out from pardon, sang their songs of praise at matins and at prime,[1] and the other hours that Christians use; and then seven days more brought them to another island, full of stench and fire of Hell. Here, if anywhere in the traditions of the past, we may find the starting-point of the Mount of Cleansing, open to the sun and air, with pleasant valleys and a quiet resting-place, rising from the waters of the ocean.[2]

[1] A friend (C. J. P.) suggests that this may possibly connect itself with *Purg.* xxviii. 16, taking *ôre* as the "early hours" of the day, and quotes Sir William Dunbar's *Thistle and Rose*—

> "And lusty May, that mudder is of floures,
> Had maide the birdis to begyn their houres,"

as a parallel, and possibly a reminiscence.

[2] Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, v. 12, supplies another vision of a brighter Purgatory even than Dante's: "a vast and delightful field, full of fragrant flowers, in which were innumerable assemblies of men in white." Bede, it will be remembered, is one of the writers whom Dante specially honoured (*Par.* x. 131). Comp. Perez, *Purgatorio*, p. 42.

I question, however, whether we may not rather trace the poet's conceptions in this matter to the force of his own character and imagination, working on the materials which the incidents of his own time brought within his reach. We have seen in the Ulysses episode (*H.* xxvi. 85–142) traces of Dante's sympathy with the enterprising spirit of the thirteenth century, of which Marco Polo was the great representative, indications, in the allusions to Tartars (*H.* xvii. 17), and the dockyard of Venice (*H.* xxi. 7), and the Southern Cross (*Purg.* i. 23) of what he may have learnt through his acquaintance with the great traveller. From the merchant sailors of Pisa and Genoa and Marseilles he may well have heard tales of their adventurous voyages. Though their enterprise was confined for the most part to the Mediterranean and its shores, some at least may have sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar, and brought back their report of the Peak of Teneriffe as it soared above the waters in its lonely greatness. Combining that report with the theory of a vast ocean covering the whole of one hemisphere of the earth's surface, and with impressions which he himself may have had as he looked on the waters of the Atlantic from the shores of Spain or France or England, there seems to me sufficient to account for the thoughts which are embodied in the *Purgatorio*. He at least could find nothing purifying or remedial in what he had imagined and described of Hell. Not in the cavern depths of earth, but where the light trembles on the waters, must be the scene of man's purification.

Not less striking is the contrast between Dante's imagined locality of the Earthly Paradise as on the summit of the Mount of Cleansing (*Purg.* xxviii.) and that which had been handed down from the past and floated in traditions round him. Here, indeed, there had been more forerunners than in the case of Purga-

tory. The site of Paradise had been found as "an island in the eastern ocean" (*St. Brandan's Voyage*). Some mediæval maps place it as an island opposite the mouth of the Ganges, surrounded, as Dante describes, by a wall of fire (*Hereford Mapp. Mund.* xxi. 25). Others, keeping closer to the narrative of *Genesis* ii., found it in the regions of Armenia (Baring-Gould, *Curious Myths*, pp. 250–265). So far Dante was free to choose whether he would place it as an island or in a continent; but in localising it on the very summit of the Mount of Purgatory he obviously followed the bent of his own symbolising genius. The truth which he sought to embody in that outward form was (1) that this was the natural close of all that Purgatory could accomplish; (2) that all the purifying processes of repentance and discipline could not lead men beyond the point of perfection and of bliss, from which, as he viewed the history of the human race, man had started, and which he had, in the very day of his creation, forfeited. For those who were saved in Christ there was reserved some better thing—the communion of the soul with God, the beatific vision of the saints, attainable only through the Incarnation :—

> "And that a higher gift than grace
> Should flesh and blood refine,
> God's Presence and His very Self
> And Essence all divine."
>
> —J. H. Newman, *Dream of Gerontius*.

"PARADISE"

It is not hard to fix the limits of the concluding portion of Dante's great work. What I have said as to the *terminus ad quem* of the *Purgatorio* fixes 1311

as a date before which the *Paradiso* could not well have been begun. I am disposed, from internal evidence, to fix a somewhat later date. The excitement with which the poet, as his letters show, watched the progress of Henry VII. was not favourable to a work which called more than all that had gone before it for calmness and self-recollection. The bitterness of disappointment which followed on the failure of Henry's enterprise (see *Canz.* xxi.) and his death in 1313 was, in the nature of things, even less propitious, and the absence of any trace of that bitterness in the opening Cantos of the *Paradiso* suggests the thought that there had been time for the wounds to heal. The traditional sojourn at Gubbio and the monastery of Fonte Avellana, assigned to this period, may have given the leisure and the retirement which were necessary for that healing. On the whole, it does not, I think, seem probable that Dante entered on the work of writing the *Paradiso* before 1315.

It must be remembered, moreover, that the *Paradiso*, in its metaphysics, its ethics, its theology, presents evidence of wider and profounder studies than either of the other parts of the poem. In this respect it stands nearly on the same level with the *Convito*, to which it presents at once a parallel and a contrast—like it in the wide range of reading which it implies, unlike it as to the regions of study which come within that range. Of the physical science which is prominent in both works we have a crucial instance in the discussion on the moon's spots in *Par.* ii. The *Convito* (ii. 14) maintains one theory, the *Paradiso* rejects that as baseless and substitutes another. The new theory is identical with that maintained by the great scientist of the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon (*Op. Tert.* c. 37). The experiment with mirrors which illustrates the theory

(*Par.* ii. 97) is exactly after Bacon's mind. It is possible, of course, that both theory and experiment may have come to Dante through other channels, but there is at least presumptive *primâ facie* evidence that the mind of the poet had come in contact with that of the philosopher. The three books which Bacon wrote for Clement IV. in 1266 had been brought to Rome, and were probably therefore accessible in Italy. Dante, as has been suggested elsewhere (*Cont. Rev.* Sept. 1881), may have met him in England. He had resided so long in Paris that his teaching was likely to be well known in the schools of science there. Any one of these possibilities presents a fair working hypothesis. The last is somewhat strengthened by the fact that the theological philosophy of Aquinas, the mystical theology of Bonaventura and Hugh of St. Victor, the devout Mariolatry of St. Bernard, would all naturally point to Paris as a starting-point. So far as we are builders of hypotheses, we are of course free to assume a possible visit to Paris after the close of Henry VII.'s enterprise, and this view has found favour with one or two Dante experts. I do not lay stress on it. All that I contend for is an interval of leisure during which the knowledge, of which the *Paradiso* bears so many traces, was acquired and stored up for use. It is at least probable that the examination on Faith, Hope, and Charity in *Par.* xxiv.–xxvi. may be a reminiscence of the time when he stood as a *baccalaureus* waiting for the examining master to propose his questions.

The Dedicatory Epistle to Can Grande was obviously written after the completion of the whole poem, but it bears no date either of time or place, and we are therefore left to infer them from internal evidence. This points, if I mistake not, to the time which followed after he had left Verona, in 1318-19. He

speaks (C. 1) of his visit as a thing belonging to the past. He had heard of the fame of his benefactor's princely munificence, and had gone, as the Queen of the South came to see the glory of Solomon, to discover how far the fame rested on a firm foundation. He had found, as she did, that the half of his greatness had not been told him. Respect and esteem had ripened into a deeper feeling, and he could now write as a "most devoted friend." He was conscious of the disparity in their outward lots, but such a disparity had been no bar in many instances famous in the past to the existence of a true friendship, and he felt that it need not be so between him and his illustrious patron. He has long wished to offer some outward tribute of that affection. He has looked over all his works, that he might see which was the most appropriate for such a purpose. He comes to the conclusion that the *Cantica sublimis* of the *Paradiso* is that which is most worthy of acceptance.

The fact of the dedication shows that the idle gossip as to the poet's sensitiveness to his patron's sarcasms do not carry much weight with them. Whatever they were at the moment, they left no sting behind them to rankle in his memory. He could look on Can Grande as worthy of reverence and admiration—of the highest honour which it was in his power to offer him. He was not afraid to place in his hands the poem in which he had spoken of the bitterness of dependence. He could say with all the truthfulness which belongs to one who felt that he was writing for future ages, that his friend had not disappointed him; that the courtesy of the mighty Lombard was such that he gave before men asked him, and more than they had asked (*Par.* xvii. 73–75); that his life and rule had filled up the outlines of the "Greyhound" prophecy of *H.* i.; that on him, as the Imperial

Vicar in Northern Italy, rested, if anywhere, the poet's hopes of the ideal Empire.

I have spoken, at an earlier stage of this study, of the *Epistle to Can Grande* so far as it bears on the general structure of the poem as a whole, of the manifold method of interpretations which might be applied to it. Besides these, however, there are hints, dropped here and there, which throw light upon the feelings, thoughts, and studies of the poet's later years. He will enter on his task of exposition, he says, "counting life but of little worth" (*vitam parvipendens*), as compared with the affection which he seeks to win. I seem to recognise in this the language of a man who feels prematurely old, who sees that the end of his labours is not far off, and therefore hastens to complete them. Towards the end of the letter (c. 32) there is a pathetic allusion to his poverty which points to another cause of anxiety.

In regard to the studies which had occupied the poet's thoughts as he wrote the *Paradiso*, we may note his repeated references to Aristotle in the *Epistle to Can Grande* (to the *Metaphysica* in c. 20; to the *De Causis* in c. 21; to the *Physica* in c. 25; to the *De Cœlo* in c. 27); to Boethius (c. 33), to Dionysius the Areopagite (the *De Cœlesti Hierarchiâ* in c. 21). From Scripture he quotes *Jer.* xxiii. 24; *Ps.* cxiv. 1 (c. 7), cxxxviii. 7–9; *Wisd. Sol.* i. 7, vii. 14; *Eccles.* v. 16 (c. 28); *Eph.* iv. 10; *Ezek.* xxviii. 12; 2 *Cor.* xii. 3, 4; *Matt.* xvii. 6, 7; *Ezek.* ii. 1 (c. 28); *John* xvii. 3 (c. 33), and *Rev.* i. 8. Seneca and Terence are referred to, and Horace (*A. P.* 89–91) quoted in c. 10. Cicero (*Nov. Rhet.*) is quoted in c. 19; Lucan in c. 22; his old teacher Boethius in c. 33. It is significant that the words which he cites from the last-named writer, "*Te cernere finis*"—the words are

spoken as to God—are placed in the closest parallelism with *John* xvii. 3, which, as he quotes it (his variation from the Vulgate is noticeable), runs, "*Hæc est vera beatitudo ut cognoscant te Deum verum,*" *&c.* I have reserved to the last a passage (c. 28) which is the most significant of all, as throwing light upon the studies of these later years. He has defended himself for having said in the *Paradiso* that he had seen many things which he could not reproduce, by a reference to St. Paul's language, when he spoke of his ascent to Paradise, where he heard words "which it was not possible for a man to utter" (2 *Cor.* xii. 3), by a reference also to the seeming meagreness of the Gospel narrative of the Transfiguration. But he has precedents closer at hand and nearer to his own time. "If these are not enough," he adds, "for my carping critics, let them read Richard of St. Victor in his book *De Contemplatione;* let them read Bernard in his book *De Consideratione;* let them read Augustine in his book *De Quantitate Animæ*, and they will carp no longer." That, I take it, is a sufficient proof of the nature of the studies which occupied the closing years of the poet's life. It is confirmed by the positions which he assigns to Richard of St. Victor in *Par.* x. 131, to Augustine in *Par.* x. 120, to St. Bernard in *Par.* xxxi.–xxxiii.

Not less striking, in the witness which the poem bears to the return of the poet's mind to its first faith and first love, is the stress laid on the lives and achievements of the founders of the two great Mendicant Orders. Whatever proofs of corruption and degeneracy might be found in their followers—and of these Dante speaks with an unsparing severity (*Par.* xi. 124–139)—they were still for him the great witnesses of the truth of Christ against the falsehood and evil of the world, the great champions of the true

Church in its conflict with heresy, or with the covetousness of popes and prelates. Whatever value we attach to the tradition that he had in his earlier years joined the Franciscan Order, and had afterwards abandoned it for what seemed the more excellent way of a self-discipline which presented no temptations, as the Franciscan Order did, to a formal hypocrisy, there is something significant in the fact that he was buried, we may well believe by his own choice, in a chapel attached to the Franciscan church at Ravenna; that according to a less credible tradition he was interred in the garb of the Franciscan Order.

In the list of names associated with those of St. Francis and St. Dominic in *Par.* xii. 127–141 we may legitimately see further traces of the later studies of Dante's life, or of the feelings which led him to choose as the objects of his reverence the great teachers, the great pastors, the great reformers of the Church. Of his indebtedness to Hugh of St. Victor I have already spoken. We note how he admires the first followers of St. Francis, the men who had the courage amidst the scorn and derision of their fellows to walk barefoot and to wear the cord; how he signalises the heroism of the three, Nathan, Chrysostom, Anselm, who had had the courage to stand before kings and emperors and rebuke them with a lionlike boldness. But the names in that list which are, I believe, most significant are the first and the last, Bonaventura and the Abbot Joachim of Fiori (*Par.* xii. 127–145).

The glory of the Franciscan Order culminated in the former of those teachers. He had received his name (he had been baptized as Giovanni) from the lips of St. Francis himself, who, on looking at him in his childhood, had exclaimed, as in the spirit of prophecy, "*O buona ventura!*" The saintliness of his life was such that it passed into a proverb that

"all men were born with original sin except Bonaventura." His training at Paris under Alexander Hales, the *Doctor Irrefragabilis*, qualified him for his work as a professor of theology at the age of twenty-four at that University (1245), and his comments on the "*Sentences*" of Peter Lombard placed him, if not on the same level as Aquinas, yet, at least, in the foremost rank of the theologians of his time. In 1256 he was chosen General of the Franciscan Order, received the cardinal's hat at the hands of Gregory X. in 1273 (he was then in a convent at Florence), and died in 1274. True to the spirit of the saint of Assisi, Bonaventura was, however, with all his scholasticism, emphatically the *Doctor Seraphicus*. In him the mystic predominated over the dogmatist, and of all the treatises that fill the seven folio volumes of his works, none so impressed itself on the minds of men, none was so likely to fascinate a mind like Dante's, as the *Life of St. Francis*. Of that Life the eleventh Canto of the *Paradiso* is, in fact, an epitome. Through both there runs the same thought, that of all the saints of God there had been none who so absolutely reproduced the holiness of Christ as Francis had reproduced it. Step by step the *Imitatio Christi* in his instance, in his espousals with evangelic Poverty, in his homeless wanderings, in his love of souls, finally in the crowning miracle of the *stigmata*, amounts to a transformation, culminates in a parallelism not far from an equality. If it would be over-bold to say that Dante's Life of St. Francis could scarcely have been written by one who had not studied Bonaventura's book, it is yet true that the assumption that he had studied it supplies the most natural explanation of all that is most characteristic in it.[1]

[1] An interesting illustration of Dante's indebtedness to Bonaventura is given by Paolo Perez in his volume on the *Purgatorio* (p. 266). In the

I am led to attribute hardly less influence on Dante's mind in this, emphatically the theological period of his life, to the last named of the goodly fellowship of the doctors of the Church, the Abbot Joachim di Fiori of Calabria. The religious movements of the thirteenth century are indeed scarcely to be understood without taking his influence on them into account. And from Dante's standpoint (*Par.* xii. 140) he was more than a doctor of the Church, and had written as one gifted with the spirit that spake by the prophets. I pass over the incidents of his earlier years, his pilgrimage to Palestine, his forty days' fast on Mount Tabor, and will confine myself to the later years of his life, when towards the close of the twelfth century he, in his Calabrian monastery, brooded over the evils of the Church, its corruptions, simony, nepotism, and greed of gain, and embodied his thoughts in his comments on the prophetic writings of Scripture. Of the many writings that passed current under the sanction of his venerated name, three at least are recognised by experts as authentic—the *Concordantia* of the Old and New Testament, a Commentary on the Apocalypse, and a *Psalterium Decem Chordarum*. Attached to the last of these are two hymns on Paradise, in the second of which Renan thinks (*New Studies*, p. 22) that we may see one of the precursors of the *Commedia* not less clearly than in the other writings of like nature which have been gathered by Ozanam, Labitte, and Thomas Wright, and of which I have already spoken in the first two parts of this study. In other books, notably

Speculum Beatæ Mariæ Virginis which bears the Seraphic Doctor's name he dwells on the fact that the Virgin Mother showed herself by word and act to be free from every taint of the seven deadly sins which are cleansed in the circles of Purgatory, to be the helper of those who fall into them. So Dante introduces some word or act of hers into every circle, and two of these, the *Ecce Ancilla Domini* and the *Virum non cognosco,* are selected also by Bonaventura (*Spec. B. V. M.*, c. iv.).

in a Commentary on Jeremiah, he was believed to have foretold the advent of the two founders of the Mendicant Orders in terms such as Dante uses when he describes them as the two wheels of the Church's chariot, on which it was to move onward in its victorious course. Joachim was, in Renan's phrase, "the Baptist of St. Francis." He at any rate looked forward to a revived Church, without wealth and state, with teachers who renounced every form of possession under a *papa angelicus*. That was to be the crowning glory of the third state of the Church when it was to be under the dispensation of the Spirit, as Israel had been under the dispensation of the Father, and Christendom, till then, under that of the Son. When the Franciscans became numerous and powerful, it was natural that they should see in Joachim the prophet of their Order; equally natural perhaps that they should exaggerate and distort his teaching. His fame spread to far-off lands, and even in England we find Adam of March collecting all fragments of his writings that he could lay hold on and sending them to Roger Bacon, to be forwarded by him to Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln.[1]

About the middle of the thirteenth century, when the Franciscan brotherhood were falling from their first love and accepting the relaxations of their vow of poverty which successive Popes had granted them, those who lamented the degeneracy, as Dante laments it (*Par*. xi., xii.), fell back under the guidance of the General of the Order, John of Parma, afterwards deposed, on the authority of Joachim. In Rousselot's estimate of his character (*Hist. de l'Evangile Eternel*, 1861, p. 44), he was of kindred spirit with the recluse

[1] Adam looks on him as having been endowed with a true prophetic inspiration. He hopes the Bishop will profit by his warnings, copy the MSS., and return them (Brewer, *Monum. Francisc.*, pp. 146–147).

contemplative spirits of the twelfth century, notably with those whom Dante has in honour, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. There is "*même éloignement pour l'école, même recours à la foi, même retour à la raison, même base pour leur mysticisme, l'amour.*" But after his death he became, as it were, against his will, the founder of a sect. Passages from his writings were put together, not without interpolations, probably by John of Parma or some of his disciples, and became the basis of the book, or the tradition, known as the *Everlasting Gospel*, in which the more exalted Franciscans saw the fulfilment of *Rev.* xiv. 6. An *Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel* epitomised and popularised the substance of what perhaps never existed as a complete volume, in 1254, and became the starting-point in the controversy between the Universities and the Friars, which lasted during the last half of the thirteenth century, and of which the treatise *De Periculis Novissimorum Temporum*, the great counterblast against the *Everlasting Gospel*, by William de St. Amour, Rector of the University of Paris, is the most conspicuous monument. The wider history of that controversy does not fall within the scope of my inquiry. What I wish to note is that Dante could not have been ignorant of it; that either in his earlier studies in the schools of the religious orders (*Conv.* ii. 13), or his later visits to Franciscan houses, he must have come into personal contact with many who had taken part in it, and that we can trace its influence in his writings. He does not indeed identify himself with the preachers of the *Everlasting Gospel*. His reverence for Aquinas and Bonaventura kept him clear from the wild fanaticism which would have overthrown all systematic theology in the name of a direct spiritual illumination. His strong feeling of the part which art had to play in the

religious education of mankind (*Purg.* x., xii.) made him hold aloof from those to whom the frescoes of Assisi and all other glories of art in painting, architecture, sculpture, were an abomination. All the same, however, there were many points in which "his chariot was as their chariot, and his horses as their horses." They had looked to Celestine V. as the Pope who, coming from his lonely hermitage, was to realise all their aspirations (*Renan*, p. 295), and Dante's bitterness against him who had made "*il gran rifiuto*" is best explained by the fact that he too had cherished like aspirations, and could not forgive the act by which they were frustrated. They, the "Fraticelli," the disciples of John of Parma, hated Boniface VIII., who suppressed the Celestinians, with a perfect hatred, and the bitter phrases with which Dante speaks of him are but an echo of the hard words which they had used before him (*Renan*, p. 292). They laid it down that none could be fit for the work of an evangelist but the barefooted followers of St. Francis, and Dante (*Par.* xi. 80) is careful to make that the crowning glory of St. Francis and his early followers. The deeper thoughts, the wider range of studies, the theories of the *De Monarchiâ*, and the instinct of the supreme artist-poet emancipated him from bondage to their superstition and their extravagances, but not the less did he incorporate with his own thoughts, what he had found in them. In the feeling that the Roman Curia was the Babylon and the Harlot of the Apocalypse (*Purg.* xxxii. 149) he was entirely of one mind with them.

This return, however, to what one may call a more orthodox standpoint than that of his middle life was united with an almost startling boldness of conception within the limits of what he held to be the Church's

faith, and yet beyond the limits of the regions of thought which she had surveyed, and over which she had thrown her landmarks of dogma and definition. From the Apocalypse onward there had been many visions of the celestial glories. The gates of pearl and the walls of gold, the fair champaign, the bright flowers, the tree and the water of life, were familiar enough, and therefore the poet, seeking the *avia Pieridum loca*, the "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme," was not contented with them. He climbed the solitary heights of knowledge, and looked out as from a Darien-peak vision-point upon the new unexplored ocean which he was about to traverse. He warns those who had so far followed him. It was no voyage upon a summer sea. It were better that they should turn back than attempt a task beyond the limits of their powers (*Par.* ii. 1–15). The vision of Paradise which had come before his thoughts, and which he was to set before his readers, was indeed a new one. To combine the Ptolemaic system of the planetary spheres, the popular astrological dogma of planetary influences, affecting, though not determining, the characters of men through the temperaments which they imparted at men's birth, the Platonic theory that the souls of men return to the starry spheres under which they were born, or from which they came, and the celestial hierarchy of Dionysius the Areopagite, and yet to maintain the orthodox dogma that the saints are, as the general assembly of the just, gathered round the throne of God, and that the bliss of each is measured by the degree in which he is capable of entering into the Beatific Vision, this was indeed a complex and arduous enterprise, such as had never before entered into a poet's imagination. And the wings of his flight soared to yet loftier heights than this, to regions in which the conditions of time

and space, that limit our thoughts here, had ceased to be. The scheme which fills the greater part of the *Paradiso* made the Empyrean Heaven, the heaven of repose and calm, the dwelling-place of God and of His saints, the supreme sphere of the *cosmos*, enveloping all other spheres. It was necessary, in order that he might present his thoughts of the unseen world in their completeness, that he should bring before men's mental vision a yet more spiritual vision, in which God was not the circumference, but the centre of the universe, which radiates light and love to the nine orders of the heavenly hierarchy, according to their capacities for receiving them. And to present this, the vision of God, as the intensest light, the contemplation of which obliterates all memory of the past, so that, as in the well-known legend of the Monk and the Bird,[1] a thousand years are as a single day, rather as a single individual moment; the presentation of the Son and the Spirit in the unity of the Godhead as two luminous circles deriving their glory from that central light, even as the great doctors of the Church had taught that the divinity of the Father was the *fons et principium* of that of the other two Persons, co-equal and co-eternal;—to unite with this the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word in the vision of one like unto the Son of Man, in that blaze of glory—this was what no poet or theologian had ever ventured on in the highest mystic contemplation, and which was only possible for one who united in himself the supreme excellence of both. From the standpoint of the Catholic theology, in which Dante had been trained, it may be said, in the words of one of its chief living representatives—

[1] The legend has been often told. As the most conspicuous instance of its reproduction, I may mention Bishop Ken's *Hymnarium* (p. 10) Trench (*Justin Martyr and other Poems*), and Longfellow's *Golden Legend*.

"PARADISE"

"Post Paradisum Dantis nihil est nisi visio Dei."[1]

And with this, as not seldom happens in the history of religious thought, there is a profounder sense of the limitations of man's power to judge the mysteries of the Divine government, leading to a wider hope than that with which the poet had started. He states with a boldness almost without precedent or parallel in mediæval thought, the case, so to speak, for the salvation of the heathen (*Par.* xix. 70–78). He enlarges his theory as to the necessity of baptism so as to admit some, at least, of unbaptized infants, those of Patriarchal and Jewish dispensation, as among the Innocents of Paradise (*H.* iv. 30–36; *Par.* xxxii. 75–84). He gives an altogether new turn to his thoughts as to the heathen who knew not God as He specially revealed Himself through Moses or through Christ, by dwelling not only, as in *Purg.* x. 73–93, on the instance of Trajan (that was explained, it will be remembered, on the assumption that the Emperor was restored to life that he might repent and be instructed in the faith), but also on that of Rhipeus (*Par.* xx. 67–72), whose righteousness ("*justissimus unus*," Virg., *Æn.* ii. 426) was, by a process the converse of that on which St. Paul dwelt in the case of Abraham, counted to him for faith, and led him indeed to an actual faith in the yet unmanifested Christ, as being in very deed "the Light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world."[2] It was not only or chiefly

[1] Cardinal Manning, in a letter to Father Bowden, commending his translation of Hettinger's "Dante's *Göttliche Comödie*" to English readers.

[2] I can scarcely refrain from connecting this enlargement of heart with Dante's intercourse with Marco Polo and other travellers. It happened in this case, as in so many others, that actual mission-work among the heathen led men to recognise that they also might be "a law unto themselves" Polo had brought back word of the righteous government of Kublai Khan. Two Dominicans were sent to him as missionaries by Gregory X. in 1274. Innocent IV. sent two Franciscans in 1289, one of them Johannes de Monte Corvino, who returned in 1305. He reported that he had built a church with dome and bells in Cambalu (Pekin); that he had trained 150 boys in Greek

in respect of his dream of a return to Florence crowned with the poet's laurel, or of the fulfilment of his ideal of a true Empire working in union with a true Church for the welfare of mankind, that he could say with truth that there was no child of the Church of Christ fuller of the grace of hope than he was (*Par.* xxv. 52).

And hope, as far as Florence was concerned, was united with a return to the vivid memories of the past. The wearied exile recalled every gate and wall, almost every house and its inhabitants, of the city he had loved (*Par.* xv., xvi.) It was a delight to him to dwell on the glories of its past greatness in contrast with its present degradation. The conditions of his own childhood, the surroundings of his own nursery, came back to him with all the distinctness of an old man's recollection of the early days of youth (*Par.* xv. 118–126). They taught him, as such memories teach us all, the lessons of the mutability of all earthly things. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever." Half the great families of the Florence of the past were now little more than names in its history, or had fallen into poverty and decay. And it taught him also the thought, to which he had already given utterance in *Canz.* xvi. and in *Conv.* iv., founded on it, as to the nature of true nobility. He saw, even when tempted by the story of the illustrious founder of his family to exult in his own ancestry, that the true nobleness which marks a man as distinguished above his fellows

and Latin; that he had made 6000 converts, and had prepared breviaries and psalteries for their use He adds that he had found their "*religiosi*" (*i.e.*, Buddhist monks) more worthy of admiration than those of Italy. He is struck with the tolerance that prevails among them, resting on the belief "*quod unusquisque in suâ secta salvetur.*" Is not the whole discussion in *Par.* x. xix just what might have been expected when a mind like Dante's came in contact with facts like these? (Wetzer and Welte, *Art. Johannes de Monte Corvino.*

is not found in pedigrees or wealth, but in righteousness of soul and scorn of baseness (*Par.* xvi. 1–9).

And Beatrice! What, we ask, were the thoughts of the closing years of the poet's life as he looked back on the consuming passion of the *Vita Nuova?* Here also, if I mistake not, we may note a difference between the *Paradiso* and the earlier portions of the *Commedia.* The personal element of her interposition to work out his salvation, as in *H.* ii., of her manifestation as reproaching him with his disloyalty and unfaithfulness, as in *Purg.* xxx., xxxi., is less prominent. The beatification, the apotheosis, if the word be not too bold, is more complete. She is idealised as the impersonation of Heavenly Wisdom, as the "*donna gentile*" had been idealised in the *Convito* period of his life as the impersonation of Philosophy (*Conv.* ii. 13–16). What he had said of the eyes of the latter as being the symbols of the demonstrations of Philosophy (*Conv.* ii. 16) is now transferred to the eyes of Beatrice as presenting the intuitions of Theology, and the demonstrations resting on them. And they glow, as she leads him from sphere to sphere, with an ever-increasing beauty (*Conv.* ii. 16). He has drunk of the waters of Lethe, and the passionate love and sorrow of those early years, the transgressions which had offended her during her life, and even after her visible presence had been withdrawn from him, lie behind him as a thing belonging to the past. He has drunk also of the waters of Eunoe, and he remembers every aspiration after wisdom and holiness which had originated in her influence over him. To her he owes the salvation that had been wrought out for him in its completeness, and he is content to think of her as taking her place among the highest of the saints of God. In that high exaltation he cannot hope to

follow her, and is content to gaze on her transfigured beauty (*Par.* xxxi. 73, xxxii. 8). And in this change of standpoint we may find, I believe, the explanation of what at first is somewhat startling—the absence of any parting words on her side, when she ceases to be the poet's guide and companion, such as had been spoken by Virgil before he vanished from the scene (*Purg.* xxvii. 127–141). Dantè has seen the vision of the Eternal Rose in the Empyrean Heaven. His eyes have scanned the hosts of the blessed ones in their ordered ranks, and he turns round to inquire of her "of many things which on his spirit weighed."

> "One thing I meant, another met my quest;
> I looked for Beatricè, and behold!
> An old man clothed as are the people blest."
> —*Par.* xxxi. 54–60.

Her last act in the *Commedia* had been like her first. She had then committed him to the care of Virgil as the representative of Human Wisdom. She now commits him to the care of Bernard, who reports that he has been sent by her as the representative of the Divine Wisdom which is one with a true Theology. He looks and sees her far above him as is the height of heaven from the depths of ocean (*Par.* xxxi. 73–76). There comes from his lips the full utterance of pent-up thanksgiving:—

> "Lady, in whom my hope breathes quickening air,
> And who for my salvation didst endure
> To pass to Hell and leave thy footprints there,
> Of all mine eyes have seen with vision pure,
> As coming from thy goodness and thy might,
> I the full grace and mercy know full sure.
> Thou me, a slave, to freedom didst invite,
> By all the means and all the methods whence
> The power could spring to work such ends aright.

Still keep for me thy great munificence,
So that my soul, which owes its health to thee,
May please thee, free from each corporeal sense."
—*Par.* xxxi. 79–90.

He speaks, but Beatrice is silent, and answers only with a glance and with the "loving smile," and then

"Turned to the Fount that flows eternally."

That is the last word of the history which began in the vision of child-like beauty with which the *Vita Nuova* opens. It is left to Bernard to point to her as she sits side by side with the Virgin and with Rachel, to bring before the poet's eyes the perpetuated vision of the Annunciation in which the Angel Gabriel revealed the mystery of the Word made flesh, to utter the magnificent hymn to the

"Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,
Lowlier and loftier than all creatures seen,
Goal of the counsels of the Eternal One."
—*Par.* xxxiii. 1–3.

It is given to him to lead the pilgrim to the end of his long journey, to the very threshold of the beatific vision, of which I have already spoken. We can enter, I think, in some measure, as we look back from this closing scene of the *Commedia* over the stages of its genesis and growth, into the feelings with which the poet, with deliberate purpose, traced the letters of its last word with which he had already closed the two previous portions. At first, when he emerged from the darkness of Hell, he had written of himself and Virgil—

"We upward climb, he first and I behind,
So that I saw the things that beauteous are,
By high Heaven borne, in opening round defined,
Thence passed once more to re-behold each star."
—*H.* xxxiv. 136–140.

He passes through the several stages of his purgatorial discipline, and when the work is accomplished and he has drunk of Lethe and of Eunoe—

> "I, from that stream that holy is and true
> Returned refreshed, as tender flowerets are
> Revived and freshened with a foliage new,
> Pure, and made meet to mount where shines each star."
> —*Purg.* xxxiii. 142–145.

Now, at last, after the revelation of the height of the Triune Glory—

> "Strength failed that lofty vision to pursue.
> But now, as whirls a wheel with nought to jar,
> Desire and will were swayed, in order due,
> By Love, that moves the sun and every star."
> —*Par.* xxxiii 142–145

ESTIMATES, CONTEMPORARY AND LATER

I

How, we ask, did the great poet get his greatness recognised? By what steps, slow or quick, did he rise to fame? What was thought of him by those among whom he lived and moved? In Browning's phrase, "How did it strike a contemporary?" What was thought of him in the centuries that followed by men of different temperaments and calibre, as they took their measure of his work and character from their own standpoint? These are the questions with regard to Dante which I propose endeavouring, with such resources as are within my reach, to answer in this *Study*.

There can be little doubt that, as a young man, Dante gained the reputation, at a singularly early age, of being a poet and a scholar. He was recognised by other poets, some of them older than himself—by Guido Cavalcanti, and Cino of Pistoia, and Dante of Maiano—as one of their company. He could send his sonnets to them when he was but eighteen on the footing of an equal (*V. N.* c. 3). His friends applied to him to find poetic expression for their own emotions (*V. N.* c. 20, 33). The poems included in the *Vita Nuova*, and probably others besides them, some at least of the *Canzoni* and *Sestine*, belong to the same period. The sonnets to Guido and Lapo (*S.* 2) were probably widely circulated among the men of letters

at Florence, and some of them, set to music by Casella (*Purg.* ii. 112), were sung at social gatherings of his friends. Latin poems, no longer extant, perhaps contributed to his fame. When he began the *Inferno*, he could speak of the *bello stile* which he had learnt from Virgil, and which had already brought him honour (*H.* i. 87). That he should think of himself as admitted to the company of the five in whom he recognised the great poets of the ancient world (*H.* iv. 102) was perhaps the outcome of his consciousness of his own capacity; but a man would hardly have ventured on what seemed so boastful without the groundwork of an established reputation, such as that which was recognised when, in 1295, he was registered in the books of the Guild of Apothecaries and Physicians at Florence as "*poeta Fiorentino.*" The *Bianchi* and *Neri* troubles, the *coup d'état* of Charles of Valois, the sentences of banishment passed now by this party and now by that, must have broken up those literary gatherings of which I have spoken. In the meantime, journeys to Rome, Siena, Bologna, possibly Paris and Oxford, may have scattered the seeds of future fame. Assuming the genuineness of the Ilarian Letter, his reputation (resting, it will be remembered, entirely on his earlier poems, Italian or Latin) had reached the Monastery of Santa Croce del Corvo in 1309.

There is no evidence—rather there is a strong presumption to the contrary—that the *Commedia* was in any real sense published in Dante's lifetime, and appeared, with other MSS., on the counters of the booksellers (*stationarii* = stall-keepers) in the towns of Italy.[1] Copies were, however, presented—the *Inferno*

[1] It is worth noting, perhaps, that the work of the bookseller was often united with that of the *Speziale* or apothecary, the calling into the guild of which Dante was himself admitted. It was in the shop of a *Speziale* at

to Uguccione della Faggiuola; the *Purgatorio* to Moroello Malaspina; last of all, the *Paradiso* to Can Grande. They were probably read, after the manner of the time, to admiring friends and followers. His wanderings in the Casentino and the Lunigiana, his sojourn at Padua and Verona and Ravenna, his friendship with Immanuel of Rome and Giotto and Villani, must all have contributed to enlarge the circle of those who knew him. Soon the nature of the work on which he was engaged became known, and women pointed at him in the streets of Verona, as they looked on his stern features and grizzled beard, as the man who had seen Hell, and had placed in it those who had incurred his displeasure. The *Eclogues* of Joannes de Virgilio show that there was a circle of scholar-poets at Bologna who were ready to welcome him shortly before his death (in 1319-20) with the poet's crown. He was, it may be, reproducing the judgment of others as well as his own when he represents Buonagiunta of Lucca, himself a poet, as recognising the secret of his success :—

> "And I to him; 'Behold in me a man,
> Who, when love breathes, marks, striving to collect
> What it dictates, and sings it as he can'
> 'Now, brother,' spake he, 'see I that defect
> Which me, the Notary, and Guittone, barred
> From that style new and sweet thou didst affect.
> Well do I now perceive how thy wings hard
> After that sweet dictator upward rose.
> Flight which to us the fates did not award.'"
>
> —*Purg.* xxiv. 52–60.

It may be noted, however, and it confirms what has been already said, that his reputation in this passage is

Siena that he stood for hours absorbed in the study of a book while a procession swept by (*Bocc. V. D.*). He may, as regards some, at least, of his works, have been his own publisher.

made to rest on one of his minor poems, the Canzone in the *Vita Nuova*, which begins—

"O ye who know what Love is, ladies kind."

Meanwhile there were, as might be expected, the valets who cannot understand the hero, and to whom we owe most of the anecdotes of this portion of his life. They told of the instance of absence of mind which I have just mentioned in a footnote. They told how the same absence of mind had led the courtiers at Can Grande's table to the practical joke of piling up their bones under his chair and reproaching him with his voracity. They related how he had offended his host by answering, when asked how it was that the professional buffoon of a prince's court found more favour than the scholar-poet, that it was because "like loved like;" how he burst into fits of impotent rage when he heard blacksmiths and donkey-drivers mar the beauty of his poems as they sang them[1] amid the noises and ejaculations of their respective callings (Sacch. *Nov.* 115). They dwelt on other eccentricities of his character: his training a cat to hold a candle (*Par.* xxvi. 97, *n.*), his way of getting rid of bores,[2] the marvellous memory which led him to answer two consecutive questions with an interval of a year between them.[3]

[1] These were obviously the *Ballate* or other minor poems, which Casella and others had set to music: and so far the stories bear witness to the wide-spread popularity which they, and not as yet the *Commedia*, had gained for him.

[2] The story runs that Dante interrupted one of this class who teased him, with the question, "What is the greatest among beasts?" The answer was "The elephant." The poet then said, "Well then, O elephant, be so good as to depart" (Frat. *V. D.* p. 263).

[3] The anecdote is sufficiently trivial, but I give it for what it is worth. "A passer-by asked him as he sat in meditation in a public piazza what was the best meat for a man to break his fast with 'An egg,' was his answer. Twelve months passed, and the same questioner found him in the same attitude, and said, 'What with?' and the poet said, 'Salt'" (Frat. *V. D.* p 263).

The part taken by Dante in the enterprise of Henry VII., his letters to the Princes of Italy and the Cardinals at Carpentras, possibly also later studies at Paris, and his diplomatic intercourse on behalf of Guido da Polenta with the Republic of Venice, tended of course to make his personality more widely known, and wherever he went it would be known that he was not a diplomatist only, but a scholar and a poet. As the end of his life drew near, even if the *Commedia* had not been published, it would be known by the Epistle to Can Grande and the correspondence with Joannes de Virgilio that he had seen visions of Purgatory and Paradise as well as Hell.

When that end came, the honour which had been denied him in life was paid in death, and in the stately funeral which his patron at Ravenna gave him, the laureate wreath was placed upon his brow. And then men began to recognise that there had been indeed a prophet among them. The bitterness with which the Pope, John XXII., looked upon the author of the *De Monarchiâ*, perhaps also on the writer of the lines in *Par.* xxvii. 55–60, might lead him to send the Cardinal del Poggetto to disinter the poet's bones as those of a condemned heretic; but the people of Ravenna refused to part with what they had learnt to count one of the great treasures of their city.[1] The *Commedia* became known; and the tale which Boccaccio reports as to the apparent loss of the last thirteen cantos of the *Commedia*, the trouble which it caused the poet's sons, so that they began to think they must finish it themselves, the discovery of the missing treasure through a vision in which Dante appeared to his sons and told them where the MS.

[1] Comp. the lines of Cino of Pistoia, cxii. :—
"*E quella savia Ravenna che serba*
Il suo tesoro, allegra se ne goda."

had been deposited, was at once evidence of the interest which the poem was beginning to create, and tended of course to heighten it."[1]

The sons of Dante probably utilised that interest by publishing the *Commedia* as a whole in a more

[1] It will not be without interest to note one or two more contemporary estimates.

(1) A sonnet by Bosone of Gubbio, written in the year of Dante's death, and addressed to his friend Immanuel of Rome, also the friend of Dante, whose wife had died that year. "Never had there been," he says, "a more disastrous season."

"*Ma mi comforta ch' io credo che Dio*
Dante ha porto in glorioso scanno."

"In this is comfort, that I trust that God
Hath placed our Dante in His glorious band."
—PAUR in *D. Gesell.* iii. 456.

(2) A sonnet ascribed to Cino of Pistoia, and addressed to Bosone, in which Dante and Immanuel are both represented as sharing, with Alessio Interminello, the doom of the flatterers in Hell (*H.* xviii 122). An answer ascribed to Bosone so far corrects the writer as to place the two poets, not in Hell, but Purgatory This, however, is so utterly unlike Cino's language elsewhere—*e g.*, in *Canz.* vii on the death of Beatrice, in *Sonn.* ciii., in which he calls Dante "*diletto fratel mio*," in *Canz.* cxii on the death of Dante, in which he speaks of him as "the fountain in whose waters every conscience might find itself mirrored"—that I agree with Paur (*D Gesell.* iii. 457) in rejecting both sonnets as spurious. The references to Cino are made from Carducci's edition, 1862

(3) The poem written by Francesco Stabili, better known as Cecco d'Ascoli, whose ill fate it was to be burnt at Florence as a sorcerer, under the title of *L'Acerba*. In it, from first to last, we have little else than the growls of an ill-natured jealousy Dante had passed into Hell under Virgil's guidance and had never left it (i. 2); he sneers at his teaching as to Fortune, nobility, and love (ii 1, 12, iii. 1), and finally boasts that his poem has no such stories as those of Paolo and Francesca, of Alberic and Ugolino (iv. 12). Frat. *V D* 287–291.

I owe the following *addenda* to the kindness of a friend (C J. P.).

(4) A sonnet on Dante's death, written on September 16, 1321, by Pieraccio Tedaldi of Florence, in which he is praised as "more copious in knowledge than Cato, Donatus, or Gualtieri" (*Trucchi*, ii.).

(5) A poem by Mucchio or Mugnon de' Fantinelli of Lucca, who may have known Dante during his sojourn in that city. Of this I give both text and translation.—

"*O spirito gentile, O vero Dante*
A noi mortali il frutto della vita,
Dandolo a te la Bonta Infinita
Come congruo e degno mediante;
O verissimo in carne contemplante
Di quella gloria là, dove sortita
E l' anima tua santa oggi partita
Dalla miseria della turba errante;
A te, il quale io credo firmamente
Respetto alla tua fede e gran virtute,

systematic way. Pietro, possibly Jacopo also, thought themselves qualified to interpret their father's mind, and wrote their notes on it, the former, if the work be his, in 1333, the latter in 1340. At a still earlier period, within twelve years of the poet's death, another

Essere à piè del vero Omnipotente,
Mi raccomando, e per la mia salute
Priego che prieghi quella majestade
Ch' è Uno in Tre, e Tre in Unitade;
Della cui Trinitade
E del cui regno si bene scrivesti
Quantò dimostran tuoi sagrati testi"

"O gentle spirit, Dante truly named,
Giving to mortal men the fruit of life,
Which Goodness Infinite hath given to thee,
As mediator fit and worthy found,
O thou who in the flesh didst contemplate
With clearest gaze that glory, there, where now
Thy soul has gained its place, at last released
From all the miseries of the erring crowd
To thee, whom I believe in fullest trust,
When I regard thy faith and virtue great,
To be a suppliant at the Almighty's feet,
I now commend myself, and for my weal,
Pray that thou pray that Majesty Divine,
The One in Three, and Three in Unity.
Thou of that Trinity, and its realm on high,
So well hast written, as thy sacred text
Bears its full witness"—*Crescimbeni*, ii. 11.

(6) A poem by Bosone da Gubbio, who was with Dante after his banishment in Arezzo written in *terza rima*, and containing a kind of argument of the *Commedia*. It begins—

"*Perocche sia più frutto e più diletto*
A quei che si dilettan di sapere
Dall' alta Commedia vero intelletto,
Intendo in questi versi proferère
Quel che si voglia intender per li nomi
Di quei che fan la dritta via vedere,
Di quest' autor ch' e gloriosi pomi
Solia cercar, e gustar si vivendo
Che sapesse de' morti tutti i domi"

"That there may be more fruit and more delight
To those whose joy is to gain wisdom true
From the true meaning of that Comedy,
I purpose in these verses to disclose
What by the various names is signified,
Of those who ope the true way to our sight
Of that great author who was wont to seek
The glorious fruits, and taste them with such zest
That all the mansions of the dead he knew"
—*Edit. of Dante, Padua,* 1822

commentary was written by the *Anonimo Fiorentino*, and one on the *Inferno* by Guido Pisano, a Carmelite friar. The date is fixed in each case by allusions to the statue of Mars as still standing on the Ponte Vecchio of Florence. Villani relates that it was thrown down by the great flood of 1333, and was never restored (note on *H.* xiii. 146; *Vill.* xi. 1). The latter presents some passages which are worth quoting, as showing the extent to which the commentator was able to appreciate his author. He obviously looks on him with the profoundest reverence. "What had been said of Ezekiel's prophetic roll, that 'it was written within and without, full of lamentations and mourning and woe,' was, he says, true of Dante's *Inferno*." He had shown that as a poet he was at once "*comicus, lyricus, satyricus, tragœdus*." He speaks of him in a short biography as "*moribus insignitus*," one who "*mortuam poesiam de tenebris eduxit*." He attaches to his commentary a short explanatory poem in *terza rima*, which he calls a "*declaratio super profundissimam et altissimam Comœdiam*." The general character of the commentary is one of sympathising insight. In the first canto, Dante, he says, assumes the character of a penitent, and, as such, he needs the *gratia prœveniens*, the *gratia illuminans*, the *gratia co-operans*, represented respectively by Virgil, Lucia, and Beatrice. He recognises that the object of the *Inferno* is to "help those who are now living to escape from their misery by abandoning their sins;" of the *Purgatorio*, to "lead them back to virtue;" of the *Paradiso*, to "lead them on to glory."

The most interesting of all contemporary testimonies is, it seems to me, that found in the *Chronicles* of Giovanni Villani (*d.* 1348). He had been Dante's neighbour in Florence, and had been with him at the

Jubilee in Rome. He gives a brief biography, mentions his studies at Bologna and Paris, his travels in many parts of the world. He gives a list of all his chief works, praises him as accomplished in every science, though a layman, as a supreme poet and philosopher. His style is more pure and polished than had ever been known before in Italian literature. The *Commedia* gives evidence of a profoundly subtle intellect, though at times he indulges over largely in invective, and his character was not without the failings of scorn and anger. He would not willingly converse with those who were not scholars, but in spite of these failings he was worthy of perpetual honour. For Villani, Dante had clearly become one of the great names of Florence (ix. 136).[1]

The next step in the *Catena* brings before us the two illustrious names of Boccaccio and Petrarch. The former (*d.* 1375) was acquainted with the poet's nephew, Andrea Poggi, and from him derived much of the material for his life of Dante. He gave a practical proof of his affection for his memory by obtaining in 1350 a grant of ten gold florins for his daughter, who was then, as she had been during the later years of her father's life, a nun in the Convent of San Stefano dell' Oliva at Ravenna. In 1373, at the request of the authorities of Florence, he undertook the work of a public lecturer on the *Commedia*, and his expositions were given on Sundays in the Duomo. He did not, however, get beyond the sixteenth canto of the *Inferno*. From Boccaccio we have a detailed description of Dante's personal appearance and habits of life. He was of middle height, stooped somewhat, but moved in a dignified and courteous manner, was

[1] Dino Compagni, while he dwells on the genius of Guido Cavalcanti, only names Dante as having been one of the envoys of Florence at Rome. It may be a question whether the fact tells for or against the authenticity of the History that bears his name.

always dressed becomingly in garments suited to his age. His face was long, his nose aquiline, his eyes rather large, his cheeks full, his lower lip slightly projecting beyond the upper. His complexion was dark, his hair black and crisp. His manner was calm and dignified and polished. He showed a singular moderation in his eating and drinking. He seldom spoke unless spoken to, and then gravely and thoughtfully; but when occasion called for it, he showed that he had the gift of eloquent and fervid speech. We must add that, as might perhaps be expected from the author of the *Decameron*, Boccaccio sees in Dante one who was not free from sensual vices, and describes him as "*molto dedito alla lussuria.*"[1]

In yet another way Boccaccio showed his reverence for him of whom he was wont to speak as the "*divino poeta.*" He found that Petrarch had deliberately held aloof from the *Commedia* through fear of losing his originality if he came under the spell of so great a master (*Ferr. M. D.* ii. 441). It was not till 1359 that Boccaccio, having written out the whole poem in his own hand, sent it to his friend and prevailed on him to read it.[2] Petrarch recognised him as the prince of Italian poets who had written in their own tongue, possibly comforting himself with the thought that his own *Africa* was more sure of immortality, and acknowledged that the subtle and profound conceptions of the *Commedia* "could not have been written without the special gift of the Holy Spirit."[3] A MS. in the Palatine collection at Florence (Cod. 180) containing marginal notes on *Par.* x.–xxx. is ascribed by

[1] The description is reproduced by Benv. da Imola in his notes on *H.* ii., with the addition of the words, "*facie semper melancolicus, meditabundus, speculativus*"

[2] The MS is now in the Vatican as Cod. N 3199.

[3] Benv. (Notes on *H.* ii.) quotes from a letter of Petrarch's to Boccaccio, "*Magna mihi de ingenio ejus opinio est potuisse eum omnia quibus intendisset*"

its editor, Palermo, to the hand of Petrarch. Meantime the work of commenting and lecturing went on. Professorial chairs for lectures on the *Commedia* were founded at Bologna, at Ferrara, and at Milan. In the first of these cities the lecturer in 1375 was Benvenuto Ramboldi da Imola (*d.* 1399), who afterwards, in 1378, reduced his expositions to the form of a Latin commentary.[1] The work was carried on by Francesco da Buti (*d.* 1406), to whose memory a tomb still stands in the cloister of the Franciscan Convent at Pisa.

Meantime the fame of the Florentine poet had been spreading in other ways. The rising art of Italy found in the *Commedia* a wide choice of subjects. Cornelius's judgment[2] that Italian art has been strong and vigorous in proportion as it has worked under Dante's influence, and that it became weak and sensuous as that influence declined, was verified from the first. Giotto's portrait of Dante in the Bargello Chapel, painted probably about 1300, was indeed the first visible recognition of Dante's rising fame; and the picture of the *Inferno* in the same chapel, with its figure of the three-headed Lucifer with a sinner between each pair of jaws, was a manifest reproduction of *H.* xxxiv. The Assisi frescoes of the history of St. Francis, the prominence given to the marriage of the Saint with Poverty (*Par.* xi. 38), the introduc-

[1] Till the present year (1887) the commentary of Benvenuto has been known only (1) through extracts printed by Muratori (vol i.), and (2) through an Italian translation by Tamburini. The publication of the original Latin text was contemplated by Lord Vernon as one of his magnificent contributions to Dante literature, and he had the Florence MS transcribed for that purpose. It has since been carried into execution by his son, the Hon. William Warren Vernon, under the editorship of Sir James Lacaita, and is now published by Barbera, Florence. Benvenuto was the intimate friend of Boccaccio, of whom he always speaks as his beloved master. His reverence for Dante is profound He speaks of him as the sun that had risen on the darkness of Italy, wrote Latin verses in his honour, and touchingly says, in a note on *Par* xxvi 3, that his own experience as a commentator had been like that which the author there describes.

[2] Grimm, H , *Life of Michael Angelo*, ii 71.

tion of the Centaur as the symbol of sensuality (*H.* xii. 56), are all thoroughly Dantesque in character, and may well be thought of as executed, directly or indirectly, under the influence of the author of the *Commedia*. What has been said of Giotto holds good in yet higher measure of Andrea Orcagna (*b.* 1329, *d.* 1389), of whom it is recorded that he was a devout student and admirer of Dante (*Lindsay*, ii. 220). If the frescoes of the Last Judgment in the Campo Santo of Pisa, of Paradise and Hell in S. Maria Novella at Florence, are not absolutely illustrations of the *Commedia*, they at least reproduce much of its leading imagery. As the work became more widely known through the printed copies which were issued in rapid succession from the *editio princeps* of Foligno (1472) onwards, it attracted yet more the notice of the artists of more enterprising genius. In Sandro Botticelli (*b.* 1446, *d.* 1510) we have one whose mind fed on Dante till it was interpenetrated with his mind and emotions (Vasari, *Life of Botticelli*), of all artists perhaps the one in most entire sympathy with him;[1] and he aimed at nothing less than a complete illustration of the whole poem.[2]

It will be admitted by all who have seen these illustrations that in their tenderness, their simplicity, the fulness of their mystic symbolism, they are worthy of their subject. A work of even greater significance,

[1] So Ruskin (*Fors. Clav.* xxii.) says of Botticelli that he was "the only painter of Italy who thoroughly felt and understood Dante." It is worth noting that he was one of the artists who came under the influence of Savonarola.

[2] The drawings, eighty-three in number (*H.* i.–vi. and ix.–xv. are wanting), are found in a MS. of the *Commedia* which was bought by the Prussian Government at the sale of the Duke of Hamilton's library in 1882, and has since been published by the directors of the Royal Museum at Berlin under the editorship of Friedrich Lippmann. The drawings appear to have been made for a member of the Medici family. An edition with nineteen engravings by Botticelli, illustrating *H.* i.–xix., and with Landino's *Commentary*, was published at Florence in 1478, and is now in the British Museum Library.

as being more public and more permanent, is found in the paintings in the chapel of the south transept of the Cathedral of Orvieto by Luca Signorelli (*b.* 1439, *d.* 1521). He introduces Dante's portrait[1] into his painting of the Antichrist, as turning a deaf ear to his proclamation. He follows Dante's selection in his choice of figures for the *Doctorum Sapiens Ordo.* Charon appears as ferryman in his representation of Hell, and Minos is there as judge (*H.* v. 4). Dante is seen again in company with Homer and Virgil, his head crowned with the poet's wreath of laurel (*H.* iv. 101). A series of medallions represent well-nigh every stage in the ascent of the Mount of Purgatory.[2]

Another artistic recognition of Dante's work worthy of record is found in the portrait in the Duomo of Florence ascribed for many years to Andrea Orcagna, but now recognised as by Domenico di Michelino. It stands over the place from which Boccaccio and his followers had delivered their expositions, near the side-door of the north aisle, and is said to have replaced in 1465 an older picture that was either unsatisfying or had decayed. It represents the poet with the familiar dress and features which reproduce alike the Bargello portrait and the plaster cast of Ravenna. He stands crowned with laurel and with an open volume in his hand. On his left are the Duomo and the towers of Florence. With his right hand he points to the gate of Hell. Behind him rises the Mount of Purgatory, presenting the Angel of Penitence seated above the three steps that lead to the entrance, and with the cornices on which the

[1] Another portrait by the same artist, where the poet is at his desk, has been published by the Arundel Society. The *D. Gesell.* (vol. ii.) reproduces a striking engraving in the Munich Gallery of a portrait ascribed to Masaccio or Ghirlandajo.

[2] J. L. Bevir, *Visitor's Guide to Orvieto*, 1884.

seven mortal sins are expiated and blotted out. Above him shine the stars which Dante loved as signs of hope for himself and for mankind. Below there is an inscription which is, I think, worth copying, as showing how the Florentines then looked on the man whose name a century and a half before had stood on their registers as condemned to the penalty of exile on the charge of official corruption, with the threat of being burnt alive if he ever crossed the frontier.

> "*Qui cœlum cecinit, mediumque imumque tribunal,*
> *Lustravitque animo cuncta poeta suo,*
> *Doctus adest Dantes, sua quem Florentia sæpe*
> *Sensit consiliis ac pietate patrem.*
> *Nil potuit tanto mors sæva nocere poetæ*
> *Quem vivum virtus, carmen, imago facit.*"

> "Who sang of Heaven, and of the regions twain,
> Midway and in the abyss, where souls are judged,
> Surveying all in spirit, he is here,
> Dante, our master-poet. Florence found
> Oft-times in him a father, wise and strong
> In his devotion. Death could bring no harm
> To such a bard For him true life have gained
> His worth, his verse, and this his effigy"

It may well be said, when we compare this language with that of the decree which condemned him to exile, that never in the history of any people was there a more complete act of amnesty and recantation.

The art of Italy, however, culminated in Buonarotti and in Sanzio; and here also Cornelius's law holds good. The former, when it was in contemplation to remove Dante's remains from Ravenna to Florence, offered to design a monument for him. Among the lost treasures of the world we may well note the designs which Michael Angelo had sketched to illustrate the *Commedia*, and which perished in the wreck of the ship which was freighted with them in the Gulf

of Genoa. As it is, in the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel, with its Charon ferryboat and the form of the Herculean Christ, which represents, not the tradition of Italian art, but the "*Sommo Giove*" of *Purg*. vi. 118, we have a sufficient proof of the influence which Dante exercised over his mind. Buonarotti, however, was a poet as well as a painter, architect, and sculptor, and he has left two sonnets (*S.* 31, 32) which are among the earliest poetical tributes in Italian to the poet's memory after Dante's own age, and which for that reason, and on account of their intrinsic worth, as embodying the thoughts of the great artist as to the great poet, I have ventured to translate.[1]

MICHAEL ANGELO ON DANTE

I

Into the dark abyss he made his way ,
  Both nether worlds he saw, and in the might
  Of his great soul beheld God's splendour bright,
And gave to us on earth true light of day ·
Star of supremest worth with his clear ray,
  Heaven's secrets he revealed to our dim sight,
  And had for guerdon what the base world's spite
Oft gives to souls that noblest grace display,
Full ill was Dante's life-work understood,
  His purpose high, by that ungrateful state,
That welcomed all with kindness but the good.
  Would I were such, to bear like evil fate,
To taste his exile, share his lofty mood!
  For this I'd gladly give all earth calls great.

II

What should be said of him speech may not tell ,
  His splendour is too great for men's dim sight ,
  And easier 'twere to blame his foes aright
Than for his poorest gifts to praise him well.

[1] I may perhaps be allowed to disclaim the translation of the first of these sonnets in Father Bowden's edition of Hettinger's work on Dante, which has been ascribed to me in error.

He tracked the path that leads to depth of Hell
  To teach us wisdom, scaled the eternal height,
  And Heaven with open gates did him invite,
Who in his own loved city might not dwell.
Ungrateful country, step-dame of his fate,
  To her own loss . full proof we have in this
  That souls most perfect bear the greatest woe.
Of thousand things suffice it this to state:
  No exile ever was unjust as his,
  Nor did the world his equal ever know.

Of Raphael it may be enough to state that Dante is represented by him in his twofold character as poet and as theologian. In the bright sunny clearness of Apollo and the Muses on Parnassus (was the painter thinking of *Par.* i. 13–36 ?), in the graver company of the Doctors of the Church who are gathered in the *Disputa*, his form is that which most attracts the spectator's eye and lingers longest in his memory.

I have, for the sake of continuity, carried on this brief survey of Italian art in relation to Dante from the generation which was contemporary with him to the crowning glories of the Renaissance. I return to the more distinctly literary labours of which he formed the subject. Of these, the more conspicuous facts to which I must confine myself are : (1) the immense multiplication of MS. copies of his works, chiefly, of course, of the *Commedia*, before the invention of printing, so that they are found in well-nigh every library in Europe ; (2) to the ever increasing crowd of commentators, among whom Castelvetro[1] and Ricaldone have been only recently made accessible to the public ; (3) to the tendency, obviously growing out of the European reputation which the name had gained, to make a Latin translation of the *Commedia*, partly

[1] The commentary of Castelvetro, which includes only *H.* i.–xxix., was written in the fifteenth century, but was not published till 1886. Ricaldone's, embracing the whole *Commedia*, was published also by the King of Italy in the same year, and dedicated to his heir The writer lived in the fifteenth century.

perhaps to meet an actual demand, partly with the benevolent intention (reminding us of Joannes de Virgilio) of making the poem better known to scholars by presenting it in the universal language. Of these, the most conspicuous is that by Giovanni da Serravalle, Bishop of Rimini, of which, for what seem to me sufficient reasons, I speak more fully in connection with Dante's fame in England.[1]

I am not writing a history of Dantean bibliography, and must refer my readers for fuller details to the exhaustive work of Colomb de Batines, the more accessible stores of Ferrazzi's *Manuale Dantesco*, or the Dante Catalogue published by the British Museum in 1887; but it is at least worth noting that the *editio princeps*, of which a copy is now in the British Museum, was printed by a German, Neumeister, at Foligno in 1472; another was also printed by two "*Teutonici*," helped by a printer of Verona, in the same year; that the term "*Divina Commedia*" first appears in a Venice edition of 1554, and with scarcely an exception became the normal title-page; that between 1472 and 1596 not fewer than seventy-eight editions are known to have been published.

Soon, however, there came a change for the worse over the mind of Italy. First the influence of the Renaissance and then of the reaction of the Jesuits against the Renaissance—a reaction not incompatible with their borrowing many of its outward features in art and literature—turned the thoughts of men into altogether a different channel. The Dante chairs of the fourteenth century collapsed or were suppressed in the fifteenth. Guicciardini (*d.* 1540) says that he found great difficulty in obtaining a copy of the

[1] Others may be named, by the Abbate dalla Piazza, Ricordo, a Carmelite, Paolo Nicoletto, a Venetian, Andreas, a Neapolitan. Penrose, *Lives and Writings of Dante and Petrarch.*

Commedia. The semi-paganism, the dilettante scholarship of the men who gathered at the table of Lorenzo de' Medici[1] for their feast of reason and flow of soul, looked with distaste on the stern masculine dogmatism of Dante's great work. They preferred to concentrate their energies on the various readings of Greek MSS., on medals and cameos, on the dreams of Plato and the Platonists. I find no tribute to Dante recorded as coming from the pen of Politian or Marsilio Ficino, or Ludovico Vives or Pico della Mirandola. It is significant that even in the history of Savonarola, whose character, as a preacher of repentance, would seem more in harmony with the strong faith and earnestness of the poet, there is no passing allusion to the language of the *Commedia* on the social extravagances of the women of Florence (*Purg*. xxiii. 94–108), which might almost have been cited as prophecies of the preaching of the Friar of St. Mark's. The one solitary fact in the record with which Dante's name is connected is that his great-grandson, also a Dante Alighieri, was exempted in 1495 from the payment of a tax on the ground that the magistrates "thought it well to show some gratitude to the descendant of the poet who was so great an ornament to the city."[2] This, and the wish of the Florentines, already mentioned, to have

[1] Lorenzo himself does indeed make a passing mention of Dante's name, and a sentence or two will suffice to show the adequacy of his tribute. "If we look into the *Commedia* of Dante, we shall find theological and natural subjects treated with the greatest ease and address. We shall there discover the three species of composition so highly commended in oratory—the simple, the middle style, and the sublime" (Roscoe, *Lor. de Med.*, p. 127, ed. Bohn).

[2] Clark, W. R., *Life of Savonarola*, p. 209. I am indebted to Mr. R. Garnett of the British Museum for some interesting facts connected with a contemporary of Savonarola's, Paolo Attavanti of the Order of the Holy Ghost. In 1479 he printed a "*Quadragesimale* (Lent Sermons) *de reditu peccatoris ad Dominum*." In this volume he quotes frequently from Dante as "*divinus poeta noster*," almost as a man might quote from a father of the Church, describes the topography of the *Inferno*, and quotes *Par*. iii. as showing "*virtutum et effectum caritatis transformantis hominem in Deum*" (*fol*. 226 *r*). He mentions that he has written a commentary on the *Commedia*. It is not known to be extant.

the sepulchre of their poet among them, were the last surviving tokens of the old Dante enthusiasm. One memorable exception has, however, to be noticed. Tasso (*b.* 1544, *d.* 1595) bore his witness that he looked on Dante as the prince of Italian poets, and wrote copious notes on the *Commedia.* These were published in 1830 by Rossini.[1]

With the Jesuits, who took the guidance of the later Renaissance, and finally tamed it to be their instrument, there was probably a combination of deliberate purpose and instinctive distaste. They aspired to be the masters of the education of Western Europe, and they made that education predominantly classical. Their taste was offended by what seemed to them the semi-barbarous element of the *Commedia.* They instinctively felt that minds trained in the school of Dante were not likely to be pliant and subservient, as they wished their tools to be. They saw, as clearly as John XXII. had done, that the Ghibelline theory of the *De Monarchiâ* was incompatible with their development of the Guelph theory, with Papal infallibility, with the power claimed for the Pope as supreme ruler of the sovereigns and states of Europe. And so where they could they systematically decried him, as when Venturi the Jesuit commentator, dwells on the many faults, the daring impiety of the *Commedia;* or they damned him with faint praise, as Tiraboschi, also a Jesuit, does in the few lines assigned to Dante in his *History of Italian Literature* (*Edinb. Rev.* xxix.)

It is significant, in connection with what we have seen already, that the first editor (Lombardi), who writes with something of the fervour which had marked

[1] Machiavelli ought also to be named as an exception (see extract from *Wegele* farther on). Mr. R. Garnett suggests that the *Divine Tragedy* of Bernardino Ochino, of which an English translation was published in 1549, shows traces of Dante's influence Milton, he is convinced, took hints from it

the earlier commentators, was a Franciscan, not a Jesuit. Bellarmine, with a sagacity which anticipated the action of later leaders of thought in the Latin Church, deemed it better to claim Dante as a witness on his side rather than to denounce him as a heretic or reformer. On the whole, however, the conspiracy of silence and the degeneracy of the Italian character, under the combined influence of the Renaissance and the Jesuit reaction, did their work effectually. It ceased to be a profitable venture to publish the *Commedia*, and but five editions appear, "*rari nantes in gurgite vasto*," between 1596 and 1732.[1]

The opening of the eighteenth century represents the nadir of the prophet's fame in his own country and in his father's house. Here we may pause for a while, and return hereafter to trace its revival, and the effects of that revival on the character, the art, and the literature of Italy.

II

EARLY ENGLAND

It is not without a certain sense of satisfaction that we note the fact that the earliest and fullest appreciative welcome given to the great poet of Italy came from the first, in order of time, of the great poets of England. The welcome so given is all the more remarkable from the contrast between the characters and the works of the two writers. It is scarcely possible to imagine a greater unlikeness in literature than that between the dreamy yet passionate idealist of the *Commedia*, never losing his self-consciousness,

[1] The British Museum Catalogue gives Vicenza, 1613; Padua, 1629; Naples, 1716, Padua, 1726; Lucca, 1732.

subjective to the last degree of subjectivity, and the healthy objective geniality of Chaucer, sympathising with all forms of human character, sensual and spiritual, humorous rather than enthusiastic, anticipating, almost or altogether, the all-embracing humanity of Shakespeare. The relation of the two in order of time is not without significance. Dante died in exile in 1321, Chaucer was born in 1328. Yet by the time the latter had grown up to manhood the fame of the former was recognised not in his own country, in which, while he lived, he was almost as a prophet without honour, but had reached the "*extremi Britanni*," whom, as we have seen, he had probably visited in his earlier manhood. In 1373, Boccaccio, then at the age of sixty, was appointed to lecture on the *Commedia* at Florence; but Chaucer's acquaintance with Dante's writing must have begun at an earlier date, and was probably, as we shall see, traceable rather to Petrarch than to the author of the *Decameron*, from whom he borrowed largely in his *Canterbury Tales*. That he, an English gentleman, filling this or that office in the court of Edward III., should thus have known the three great names in the Italian literature of the time, shows that there was a more real fraternisation between the men of letters of the two countries than has been common since. It was partly perhaps consequent on the intercourse of England with the Papal See, and the frequent missions from one court to the other; partly also on the habits of the university life of the time, which led Italian students to come to Oxford and Cambridge, and English students to visit Bologna and Padua.[1] When Chaucer was chosen in 1368 as an envoy to Genoa, it was probably because he was already known to possess

[1] *E.g.*, Francesco d'Accorso (*H.* xv. 110, *n*) had for several years lectured on the Canon Law at Oxford.

some acquaintance with the language and literature of the people to whom he was despatched. The mission to which he was thus appointed was connected with the marriage of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III., with Violante, the daughter of the Duke of Milan, at which Petrarch was present. To this intercourse with the Italian poet Chaucer refers his knowledge of the tale of Griseldis :—

> "I wol tell you a tale, which that I
> Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk
> As preved by his wordes and his werk.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Frannceis Petrarke, the laureat poete,
> Highte this clerke, whose rhetorike swete
> Enlumined all Itaille of poetry."
>
> —*The Clerke's Tale, Prol.*

It is a legitimate inference that it was through this converse with Petrarch that Chaucer became acquainted with the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, of which he afterwards made such full use in the *Canterbury Tales*, and with Dante. The MS. of Dante's works which he brought back with him may reasonably be looked on as the first copy that had found its way to England. Chaucer at all events was not slow to recognise the greatness of the poet whose life and character presented so vivid a contrast to his own.

Thus we find in the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*, written probably in 1382—

> "Envie is lauender[1] of the court alway,
> For she ne parteth, neither night nor day,
> Out of the house of Cæsar, thus saith Dant,"

where we have a manifest reference to *H.* xiii. 64. So again in the *House of Fame* (i. 453–458) he speaks of Æneas :

[1] Lauender = laundry-maid, and used by Chaucer as an euphemistic equivalent of Dante's "*meretrice*."

"And eueriche tourment eke in Hell
Saw he, which long is for to tell,
Which paines whoso lists to know
He must rede many a row
In Virgile or in Claudian,
Or Dante, that it tellen can."

In the *Canterbury Tales*, belonging to the period of completed culture in Chaucer's life, the quotations are, as might be expected, more numerous. Thus in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* we have (l. 6708)—

"Wel can the wise poet of Florence,
That highte Dante, speken of this sentence"

The sentence in question is that true "gentillesse" depends not on lineage, but on character; and on this theme Chaucer moralises for some forty lines, in words which are simply a paraphrase partly of *Purg.* vii. 121–122, and partly of the *Canzone* (*Canz.* xvi. Volume v.) which opens with

"*Le dolci rime d'amor, ch' io solea.*"

The *Frere's Tale* gives a passing humorous allusion. The foul fiend appears to a sompnour, and answers his questions as to the infernal world with the mocking promise that before long

"Thou shalt, by thine own experience,
Conne in a chaiere read of this sentence
Bet than Virgile, while he was on live,
Or Dante also."

In the *Monke's Tale* (*C. T.* xiv. 700–772) we have a more elaborate attempt to introduce Dante to the notice of English readers. The tragedy of Ugolino had impressed itself in its unspeakable horror and terrible simplicity on Chaucer's mind, and he gives a condensed rendering of it, passing from the first person, in which Dante makes Ugolino

tell his own story, to the third. At the close we read :—

> "Whoso wol hear it in a longer wise,
> Redeth the grete poete of Itaille,
> That mighty Dante, for he can it devise,
> From point to point, not o worde will he faille."

Nor was Chaucer's knowledge of the *Commedia* limited to the *Inferno*. His translation of the magnificent *Hymn to the Virgin* in *Par.* xxxiii. 1–27 shows that he had studied the whole poem. I give the first verse :—

> "Thou maide and mother, doughter of thy Son,
> Thou well of mercy, sinful soules' cure,
> In whom that God of bounty chus to won,
> Thou humble and high ower every creature,
> Thou nobledest so fer forth our nature
> That no desdain the Maker had of kinde
> His Son in blood and fleshe to clothe and winde."
> —*Second Nonnes Tale*, *Prol.*

Enough has been said to show that it was through our morning-star of poetry that Dante, as the Italian dayspring from on high, first came within the ken of English readers. Other facts testifying to a like appreciation in the same period of English history may be briefly noted. Gower, Chaucer's friend (*b.* 1320, *d.* 1402), mentions "Dante the poete" in the text of the *Conf. Amant.* (vii. 154), and explains in a marginal note that he was a poet of Italy. Lydgate (*b.* 1375, *d.* 1460) in his *Fall of Princes* speaks of Dante as "of Florence the laureate poete, demure of loke, fulfilled with patience," almost as if he had seen the Bargello portrait, and mentions the three parts of the *Commedia*. In 1416 we have the noticeable fact that two English bishops, Nicolas Bubwith of Bath and Wells and Robert Hallam of Salisbury, while attending the Council of Constance, requested

Giovanni da Serravalle, Bishop of Rimini, to translate the *Commedia* into Latin with an explanatory comment, a task which the good Bishop, obviously a warm Dantophilist, readily undertook, and completed within fourteen months.[1] The English prelates may have been led only by Dante's general reputation to desire a fuller acquaintance with his writings. They may have read of him in Chaucer or in Gower. But it is just as probable that they may have inherited the English traditions of Dante's presence in London and Oxford. In the case of the former of the two, there may have been some links of directly local association (*Par* x. 139–148, *n.*). It is just as likely, at all events, that Serravalle reported Dante's visit to England and studies at Oxford on the strength of what they told him, as that he invented the story, as sceptical critics have surmised, in order to please his English friends. It may be noted, lastly, that, like so many of the early Dantophilists, he was of the Franciscan Order. Another witness to the honour in which Dante's name was held in England is found in the fact that the library of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester (*d.* 1447), which he gave to the University of Oxford, contained two volumes of his works.[2] A little later on, John Gunthorpe, afterwards Dean of Wells (*d.* 1498), went with two other students of Oxford to study with Guarini, the famous scholar of Ferrara, and on his return brought with him a large number of Italian and other MSS., which he left to the libraries of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge (Warton, *H. P.*

1 The translation has never been printed, but the MS., after many vicissitudes, was purchased by the British Museum in 1885. It will be remembered that it is to Serravalle that we owe the statement that Dante studied at Oxford and was examined for his degree in Paris. Hallam was Chancellor of Oxford (1403–6), and attended the Council of Pisa in 1408. Bubwith also was probably educated there (*Lyte*, p. 316). Either of the two bishops may have known Chaucer (*d.* 1400) personally, as they were much about the court.

2 *Lyte*, p. 321. We are not told what the works were.

ii. 555).[1] In the early poetry of the Tudor period, with which Gunthorpe forms a connecting link, Petrarch had perhaps a more commanding influence—as seen in the sonnets of Wyatt and Lord Surrey—than Dante; but the latter writes his *Restless State of a Lover* in *terza rima*, and Puttenham in his *Art of Poesie* (i. 31) names both these writers as having studied also in the school of the author of the *Commedia*. In Sackville's *Induction* we have a vision of Hell which shows distinct traces of his influence. In 1550 William Thomas, author of a defence of Henry VIII., written in Italian, published his *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammar, with a Dictionare for the better understanding of Boccace, Petrarche and Dante*, and so supplies evidence that the last-named poet commanded the attention of English students aiming at literary culture. Among those students we may name as the foremost in fame Sir Philip Sidney. His language is sufficiently appreciative. It forms part of his *Defence of Poesy* that "in the Italian language the first that made it to be a treasure-house of science were the poets Dante, Boccace, and Petrarch." Towards the close of his book he promises a great reward to those who will no longer scorn the sacred mysteries of poetry (p. 87, edit. 1831). "Thus doing, your names shall flourish in the printers' shops: thus doing, you shall be of kin to many a poetical preface. You shall be most fair, most rich, most wise, most all: you shall dwell upon superlatives: your soul shall be placed *with Dante's Beatrix* and Virgil's Anchises."

The poet that was thus a familiar name to Sidney was not likely to be altogether unknown to Spenser. The parallelism between his *Letter to Sir W. Raleigh* and Dante's *Epistle to Can Grande* has been already

[1] I have not been able to ascertain whether these books included Dante.

pointed out (p. 25), and, looking to the fulness with which the theory of an allegory of many meanings is worked out, may be more than an undesigned coincidence. The structure and style of the *Faerie Queene* are, however, based upon Tasso rather than Dante; nor can I find in Spenser's works any instances of reproduction or allusive references sufficient to show that he had studied Dante, unless it be in the mention of the "sad Florentine" in the *Visions of Bellay* (v. 13), and in that case I must confess that I am unable to determine to what passage in Dante the line alludes, though *Purg.* ii. 41–45 suggests itself as possible. The parallelisms indicated by Todd in his edition of Spenser (iii. 57, iii. 63, iv. 310) seem to me quite insufficient to prove that the author of the *Faerie Queene* borrowed from Dante.

The question whether we can trace any reminiscences of Dante in the poet whose name stands with his as one of the goodly company of the great master-spirits of the world, "poets not for an age, but for all time," is one which I, with most others, should be disposed to answer in the negative. The opposite view has, however, been maintained with so much ingenuity by a writer obviously profoundly intimate with both, that at least a passing notice of his theory may legitimately find a place here. In two articles in *Blackwood's Magazine* (June 1884, June 1885), under the heading of *New Views of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, the writer works out elaborately the conclusion to which he has been led, that the "other poet" of *Sonnets* lxxix., lxxx., lxxxv., lxxxvi., is none other than Dante, and that the spirit who teaches that poet, the "familiar ghost" who "nightly gulls him with intelligence" is none other than the ideal Beatrice. The writer finds in the *Vita Nuova* the key to the yet unsolved mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets, the later

poet embodying Wisdom and Holiness in a masculine ideal of beauty, as the earlier had done in a feminine ideal. To him Dante, and St. Augustine, as Dante's master, are Shakespeare's greatest teachers.

I cannot say, with all my desire—a desire perhaps carried sometimes to excess—to find traces of Dante wherever there is any possibility of finding them, that I have risen from the study of these papers, interesting and suggestive as they are, with even the shadow of conviction. I do not find in Shakespeare's "sugared sonnets" the tone of the *Vita Nuova*. I find no evidence that Shakespeare knew enough Italian to read Dante in the original, and as yet there was no English version of any of his writings accessible.[1] Admitting, as probable enough, that Shakespeare may have heard of him through Sidney or Spenser or other men of letters among those with whom he lived, there would have been, I conceive, had there been any indebtedness of thought, a more direct recognition than a few incidental parallelisms, which might well be undesigned and unconscious.

In passing from the Tudor to the Stuart period of English literature, the most conspicuous instance of acquaintance with the *Commedia* which has come under my notice is found in the *Religio Medici* of Sir Thomas Browne (*b.* 1605, *d.* 1682). "Dante's characters," he remarks, speaking of the OMO of *Purg.* xxiii. 31, "are to be found in skulls as well as faces" (p. 204). He speaks of the "fabulous Hell" of Dante, wherein Plato and Socrates find a place (*H.* iv. 134), whilst "Cato is to be found in no lower place than Purgatory" (*Purg.* i. 73), and notes that Epicurus "lies deep in Dante's Hell" (*H.* x. 14)

[1] It is perhaps possible that Grangier's translation (1596) may have made the *Commedia* known to English men of letters, who read French but not Italian. The first Italian edition of the *Vita Nuova* was printed at Florence in 1576.

for his denial of immortality (pp. 215, 216, ed. 1831).

The scholar-poet of the next generation, of whom also we may say that he was numbered "equal in renown" with Dante, who travelled in Italy, and knew Galileo, and wrote Italian sonnets, was, we know, attracted by the fame of his great predecessor. Two passages meet us, which, though familiar enough, may well be quoted. In the sonnet to Mr. Henry Lawes we have the tribute of well-nigh the greatest of English poets to the greatest of Italian :—

> "Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
> Than his Casella, whom he woo'd to sing,
> Met in the milder shades of Purgatory"

In his *Reformation in England* he strengthens his case against Prelacy by quoting from *H.* xix. 115 :—

> "Ah Constantine! of how much ill was cause
> Not thy conversion, but those rich domains
> That the first wealthy Pope received of thee!"

It is not without interest to note that one at least of the great theologians of the English Church in the seventeenth century was also a student of the *Commedia.* Jeremy Taylor, in his *Life of Christ* (Disc. xiv.), treating of the Gospel works of healing, writes: "The miracles were wholly an effect of Divine Power, for Nature did not at all co operate; or, that I may use the elegant expression of Dante, it was such

> *a cui Natura*
> *Non scaldò ferro mai, nè battè ancude,*"
> (*Par.* xxiv. 101),

for which Nature did never heat the iron nor beat the anvil."

In the literature which followed on the Restoration, however, the form of Dante drops into the background. I do not find any allusion to Dante in the

prose or verse of Dryden. Travellers like Robert Boyle and John Evelyn and Addison sojourn in Florence and Ravenna, and his name is conspicuous by its absence. It is a natural inference from their silence that the men of letters with whom they came in contact had nothing to tell them of the *Commedia*; that the *ciceroni* who acted as their guides had no motive for showing them the birthplace or the sepulchre of Dante. Addison visits Ariosto's tomb at Ferrara, and reports that the gondoliers of Venice sang stanzas of Tasso, but does not even name the greater poet. In his series of papers on Milton in the *Spectator*, he compares him with Homer and Virgil, but not with Dante. The only trace of recognition is found in a *Sketch for a History of English Poetry* published in *Gray's Works* (ed. 1814), and said to have been in Pope's handwriting, which had found its way through Bishop Warburton to Gray's friend, Mason. In that sketch, Surrey, Wyatt, and Sidney are classified as belonging to the school of Petrarch; Sackville to that of Dante. In this case, however, the exception proves the rule. Alike in Italy and in England, not to speak of other parts of Europe where it was less known, it seemed as if the history of the *Commedia* was to furnish yet another instance of the transitoriness of human fame, the hollowness of the "bubble reputation."

III

ITALY

I have noted the poverty of the Italian press in its editions of Dante between 1596 and 1726. From that date there are symptoms of a recovery, at first

slow and tentative, afterwards advancing with an ever-accelerated velocity. Sixteen editions appear between 1726 and 1800; over a hundred between 1800 and the great Dante sex-centenary festival of 1865. Since then their name is legion, and the catalogue of a *Biblioteca Dantesca*, including commentaries, disputations, lectures, reviews, and pamphlets on points connected with his works, would fill a fair-sized octavo volume. Many influences were at work, towards the close of the eighteenth century and in the earlier years of the nineteenth, contributing to this result. The genius of Alfieri and Monti gave a more masculine and vigorous character to the literature of Italy than it had had since the days of Tasso. The passion of the former poet for the Countess of Albany might not unnaturally seem to him more or less closely parallel to that of Dante for Beatrice, and there would be a certain attraction of affinity drawing him to the study of the *Vita Nuova*, and afterwards of the *Commedia*. It was said of him that he thought himself a second Dante. The Dictionary of the *Accademia della Crusca* would attract attention to the works of him who had been almost the creator of the language as an instrument of literature, and had done so much to ennoble it. The impulse given to thought by the French Revolution, the uprising of men's minds in Italy as elsewhere against the Jesuit influence which had held them in bondage, later aspirations after national independence and unity, a profounder and more reverential study of the mediæval period of Italian history, all these were favourable to a revived interest in Dante as the great poet-prophet of the nation. That interest showed itself, as it was natural that it should do, in the region of biography. From Leonardi Bruno in 1672, no one had cared to write a life of Dante till 1727, when the work was taken in

hand by Manetti. This was followed in 1759 by Pelli, who gathered with an exhaustive fulness all that could be brought together from the documents and traditions of the fourteenth century, by Chabanon in 1773, by Fabroni in 1803, Petroni in 1816, Orelli in 1822, Gamba in 1825, Blanco in 1834, Balbo in 1839, Missirini in 1840, Savelli in 1841, Torri in 1843.

Among those who took part in this revival, a prominent place must be assigned to those whose fate, as political exiles from their fatherland, brought them into a spiritual fellowship with the great Florentine. Ugo Foscolo (*b.* 1776, *d.* 1827), in his memorable *Discorso sul Testo di Dante* (1825), and yet more, perhaps, by his articles on Dante in the *Edinburgh Review* (vols. xx. and xxix.), made the name of Dante more familiar than it had been to English men of letters. Gabriel Rossetti (*d.* 1854), in his *Spirito Anti-Papale* (1832) and his commentary on the *Inferno* (1827), startled men's minds by the boldness of his theory that the *Vita Nuova* was no record of the poet's love for a personal Beatrice, but a mystic cypher-writing of initiation into the mysteries of a Ghibelline sect; that the poet himself was not the devout dogmatist, the student of Aquinas that he claimed to be, but was throughout his great poem, as in his other works, carrying on a determined warfare, not only against the vices of individual popes, the corruptions of the Papal Curia, the degeneracy of the clergy and the monastic orders, but against the whole dogmatic system which was associated with them. Mazzini more legitimately looked to Dante as the prophet of Italian unity, the first of the great witnesses that Italy had, as a nation, a right to live, not broken up into a host of petty principalities, nor under the yoke of the stranger, but strong and mighty,

taking its place among the great powers of Europe (*Works*, vol. iv., *Essay on Dante*).

Still more memorable as an instance of the influence of Dante during the present century on the master-minds of Italy is the reverence paid to him by Antonio Rosmini of Rovereto. In 1822, when he was but twenty-four, he studied the *Commedia* and the *De Monarchiâ* with profound interest, wrote many notes on them, and drew out the plan of an elaborate series which was to include: (1) The Architecture of the Dantean Universe; (2) The Political Philosophy of Dante; (3) His Moral Philosophy; (4) His Theology; (5) His Style. Of these, only the second portion has been published by Paolo Perez in the volume of *Pensieri e Dottrine* selected from Rosmini's works (*Intra.* 1873). The life of Rosmini led him to become a metaphysician and a saint, the reviver of the study of Aquinas, the founder of a religious order rather than a man of letters in the wider sense; but the occasional references to Dante in his writings show that he never lost his reverence for him as a great religious thinker. In spite of the attempts of Foscolo, Rossetti, and Mazzini to read the thoughts which they severally brought with them between the lines of the *Commedia*, he maintained throughout that Dante was a Christian and a Catholic as well as a devoted patriot. The writer of the *Five Wounds of the Church* in the nineteenth century was probably well prepared to accept the stern judgment which the Florentine poet had passed on like corruptions in the thirteenth and fourteenth. It may be added, as not without interest for all students of Italian literature, that in the later years of his life Rosmini found in Manzoni one who shared his Dante studies. When the former died, the latter, who had been frequently with him in his last illness, looked round the room

for some relic which he might keep as a memorial of his friend, and found a copy of the *Paradiso* which had been used by Rosmini during the last few days or weeks of his life (W. Lockhart, *Life of Rosmini*, ii. p. 85). Among those who, like Manzoni, were at once patriots and Catholics, one notes the name of Silvio Pellico (*d.* 1854), who had but two books during his imprisonment, the Bible and the *Commedia*.

The impulse thus given was furthered by incidents which roused the enthusiasm of the Italian people, as it became conscious of its life, of its union with the past, of a possible future that would realise the dream ideal of that past, to a new intensity. The discovery of the Bargello portrait in 1840 kindled a fresh enthusiasm in the minds of the Florentines, and indeed of all Italians. Florence could at last give outward expression to her reverence for her *sovrano poeta* in the monument in the Church of Santa Croce. The sex-centenary festival of the poet's birth in 1865 brought together the Dante-worshippers from all parts of Europe. An exhibition of Dante relics gave a new vividness to the distant past that had been fading away into the dim mists of memory, and men looked on the very entry of Dante's name in the *Matricole dell' Arte de' Medici e Speziali*; on the two decrees of Canti de' Gabrielli that drove him into exile and sentenced him, if he returned to Florence, to be burnt alive (1302); on the document appointing Boccaccio as the first lecturer on the *Commedia* (1373); on Michael Angelo's offer to design a worthy sepulchre for Dante in his native city. Events referred to in the *Commedia* became more living when men read the decree of the Commune of Siena ordering the erection of a church after the battle of Montaperti (*H.* xxxii. 81), or the register of the death of Pier delle Vigne from the record of the hospital at

Pisa (*H.* xiii. 58), or the oath of the Podestà of Siena to destroy the palace of Provenzano Salvani (*Purg.* xi. 121), or the formal condemnation of Capocchio by the Council of the same city (*H.* xxix. 136), or the Brief of Nicholas IV. condemning the murder of Ugolino and summoning the Archbishop Ruggieri to Rome to answer for his conduct (*H.* xxxiii. 14).[1] The sex-centenary festival was, as might be expected, abundantly fruitful in orations, letters, pamphlets, and poems of the panegyric type. Dantophilists of all countries came to keep the feast of the prophet who was at last honoured in his own country. The poets of other countries, *e.g.*, Tennyson, sent their tributary wreaths of verse.[2] The house of the poet's birth, the stone in the piazza where he used to sit, were identified. A marble monument, more worthy of the poet than that inside the church, was erected in the Piazza of Santa Croce. By a singular coincidence, Dante's burial-place became the starting-point of a new interest within a few days of the opening of the festival. The people of Ravenna, anxious to do their part in the great ceremonial which was to be solemnised in that city on June 24 and 25, determined to give a clearer view of the shrine that contained the poet's monument, and in the course of their operations the workmen on May 27 removed some stones in the wall of the north aisle of the Church of St. Francis.

1 See the Catalogue of the *Esposizione Dantesca*, Florence, 1865.

2 I insert, by Lord Tennyson's and Messrs. Macmillan's kind permission, the lines referred to :—

TO DANTE

WRITTEN AT REQUEST OF THE FLORENTINES

"King, that hast reign'd six hundred years, and grown
In power, and ever growest! since thine own
Fair Florence, honouring thy nativity—
Thy Florence now the crown of Italy,
Hath sought the tribute of a verse from me,
I, wearing but the garland of a day,
Cast at thy feet one flower that fades away."

Their hammers fell after a few strokes upon the wooden cover of a chest. On the inner side of the cover were the words, "*DANTIS OSSA. Denuper revisa die 3ª Junii* 1677." On the outer side was written, "*DANTIS OSSA, a me Frē Antonio Sānti hic posita Anno* 1677, *die* 18 *Octobris*." The chest contained human bones and a few withered laurel leaves. It was natural to assume that thus the mortal remains of the great poet were once more brought to light. An examination of the bones by Professor Welcker, comparing them with extant descriptions of Dante's person, confirmed this conclusion. It followed of course that the sarcophagus in the Capella di Dante erected by Cardinal Valenti Gonzaga in 1780 was a cenotaph. A note was found in a missal in the convent in the hand of a Fra Tommaso Marredi, dated August 1, 1780, stating that the sarcophagus had been opened and found empty.

What led, we ask, to this removal of these bones from their first resting-place to the position in which they were now found, and in which they had remained, hidden and unknown, since the middle of the seventeenth century? Had they been removed for the sake of safety when the Cardinal del Poggetto came (1327–34) to exhume the body of the writer whom John XXII. had condemned as a heretic, and to scatter his bones to the four winds of heaven? Were they hidden in 1519, when the leading men of Florence applied to Leo X. for leave to remove them to their own city, to be reinterred in the monument which Michael Angelo was to construct?

A closer examination of records of the last decades of the seventeenth century has led Witte and other experts to a different conclusion. It appears that in 1694 a dispute arose between the municipal authorities of Ravenna and those of the convent of St. Francis as

to the right of asylum claimed by the latter in the case of a prisoner who had sought refuge in the chapel which contained the monument of Dante, and had been forcibly removed by the former. The magistrates contended that the chapel, as containing the bones of a heretic, had lost the privilege of asylum. The answer of the Friars was, not to deny the charge of heresy, but to plead that the bones of Dante were not in the chapel, and they appealed to an inscription in the chapel itself in confirmation of their statement. The magistrates gave way, and admitted that the Friars had made out their case.

It follows from this that the bones had been removed before 1694, and so we get a *terminus ad quem*. But an entry in the accounts of the convent for 1648 records the payment of three *lire* for plastering the *Capella di Dante*. At that time, therefore, the remains were probably in their original position, and so we get a *terminus a quo*. The solution which suggests itself is that between the two dates the Friars, looking to the ill repute into which Dante had fallen, and, anxious to maintain their privileges, had removed the bones, the presence of which seemed to desecrate the chapel. It is further on record that in 1660 the Friars removed a number of old Roman sarcophagi, which had been placed in a portico of the church, as desecrating it. Some of these perished; others were transferred to the churchyard. Witte conjectures that Dante's bones were removed in this process of expurgation, and that some Friar in the Convent, as an Abdiel, "faithful found among the faithless" to the memory of Dante, gathered the bones which had thus been ejected, with the laurel leaves that had once crowned the poet's brows, and placed them where they would be free from the risk of further desecration, probably without the knowledge of his

colleagues, and, when Antonio Santi was chancellor of the convent (he was elected in 1672), communicated his secret to him, and obtained from him, obviously with more or less secrecy, an official authentication of their genuineness. The history is, I think, worth telling, partly as illustrating, like the moralisings of the gravedigger in *Hamlet*, the vicissitudes of human things, partly as pointing to the nadir of Dante's reputation in the estimate of his fellow countrymen, the discovery of that nadir synchronising, curiously enough, with the zenith of the Florentine sex-centenary.[1]

The history of Dante literature in Italy since 1865 is sufficiently voluminous. I can only note as the most noteworthy contributions to a better estimate of the poet the exhaustive editions by Lubin and Scartazzini, and the sceptical criticisms of Bartoli in the volume of his *Storia della Litteratura Italiana* which he dedicates to Dante. The purely negative character of his work excludes it here from any further notice. Scartazzini's biography, as written in German, will find a place at a later stage in this history.

IV

THE REVIVAL IN ENGLAND

Among the earliest traces of the Dante revival in England I note the fact that in the latter half of the eighteenth he begins to find translators, and to a certain extent admirers. Hayley renders the first three cantos of the *Inferno* into *terza rima*,[2] and feels

[1] I have drawn my facts mainly from the article by Witte, *Dante's Gebeine in Ravenna* (*D. Gesell.*, i. pp. 62–71).

[2] I do not find the translation in Hayley's *Poetical Works* (6 vols. 1778), nor is it named in the *Dante Catalogue* of the British Museum Library.

apparently as if his boldness called for an *apologia*. He thought it seemly to sum up all that could be said in Dante's favour in the following lines :—

"The patient reader, to thy merit just,
With transport glows and shudders in disgust;
Thy failings sprang from thy disastrous time,
Thy stronger beauties from a soul sublime."
HAYLEY *On Epic Poetry* (*Ep.* iii 117–120).

Even that tribute, however, was too much for the refined taste of Horace Walpole, and he dismisses the Florentine as lying outside the range of criticism. "If I could admire Dante, which, begging Mr. Hayley's pardon, I cannot."

I rescue from the *Gentleman's Magazine* (xl. 38) some lines by the Hon. Charles Yorke to his sister on her copying a portrait of Dante by Clovio. They are not without interest as showing that the name was becoming somewhat more familiar to travellers and literary amateurs :—

"See Dante, Petrarch, through the darkness strive,[1]
And Giotto's pencil bids their forms survive.
* * * * *
Fair Beatrice's claims would lose their force,
No more her steps o'er Heaven direct his course;
To thee the bards would grant the nobler place,
And ask thy guidance through the realms of peace."

An honourable place among those who took part in the revival of Dante studies must be assigned to the *History of English Poetry* by Thomas Warton (*d.* 1790). In connection with Sackville's *Induction* and its Descent into Hell he enters on an elaborate comparison with the *Commedia*, of which he gives, as far

1 Possible evidence that the walls of the Bargello Chapel had not yet been white-washed; but another portrait (that of Michelino?) seems to have passed as Giotto's; even Carlyle writes of Giotto's portrait before the discovery in the Bargello (*Lecture on Dante* in *Heroes and Hero-Worship*).

as the *Inferno* is concerned, a fairly full analysis. His criticism is, however, pre-eminently that of the eighteenth century. "The grossest improprieties of this poem discover an originality of invention, and its absurdities often border on sublimity." . . . "The ground-work of his *Hell* is classical, yet with many Gothic and barbarous innovations." In some of the torments of the damned he finds "disgusting fooleries." "He describes not disagreeably the first region which he traverses after leaving Hell. . . . The truth is, Dante's poem is a satirical history of his own time."

As the *Commedia* thus became better known, it began to attract in England, as in Italy, the attention of artists. Sir Joshua Reynolds's Ugolino (*d.* 1792) is, as far as I can trace, the first instance. It was followed in 1800 by a series of illustrations by William Blake. These are seven in number, and are confined to the *Inferno*, the subjects selected being *H.* v. 127; xxii. 70, 135; xxv. 45, 82; xxii. 71; xxxii. 79. The designs, in their weird titanic conception, are eminently characteristic. In the dream trance-like state which formed so large a part of Blake's life, he received visits, so he said, from Shakespeare, Milton, and Dante, and has left on record his judgment of the last named.

"Dante," he said, "was an atheist, a mere politician, busied about this world, as Milton was, till, in his old age, he returned to Him whom he had had in childhood." "He is now with God." "Dante and Wordsworth, in spite of their atheism, were inspired by the Holy Ghost."[1]

Not long afterwards (1807) Flaxman was employed by Mr. Hope to illustrate Dante. His work embraced the whole of the *Commedia*, and includes not fewer than a hundred engravings. His mind also was in

[1] Crabb Robinson's *Reminiscences*, by T. Sadler, 3rd ed. 1872, ii. pp. 10–19.

sympathy with the poet's genius, and of all illustrations of the *Commedia*, not excepting even Botticelli's, Flaxman's seem to me the most satisfying, especially in the *Paradiso*. The last and most complete edition was published in 1867.

The year 1770 was memorable for the appearance of the first English translation, aiming at more than the reproduction of a few striking passages, by the Rev. Henry Boyd, Curate of Tullamore in Ireland. The first edition was confined to the *Inferno*, but in 1785 it was republished with the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.

Next in order I find a translation of the *Inferno* printed privately and anonymously in 1782, but identified by a MS. note in the copy in the British Museum as the work of Charles Rogers of the Custom-House.

It can scarcely be said that either Boyd or Rogers succeeded in making the wider public of English readers familiar with Dante's poem or in gaining any large measure of critical approval. With the next in order of succession the case was widely different. The translation by H. F. Cary (of the *Inferno*, *H.* i.–xvii. in 1805, the whole *Commedia* in 1814) at once took its place as the standard version.[1] He chose blank verse for his form, and succeeded in maintaining something of a Miltonic loftiness of style throughout. The work passed through many editions in the translator's lifetime, and still, as I have said, "holds its own" in the book-market in many cheap and popular editions. Well-nigh every English quotation of Dante, in reviews and elsewhere, is from Cary. Macaulay pronounced

1 Cary's correspondence with Miss Seward, a literary lady of some eminence, given in his *Life*, furnishes a curious illustration of the taste of the opening years of this century. She considers that he is greatly demeaning himself in undertaking such a work, and thinks his version shockingly familiar and undignified.

it to be a version of almost unequalled merit.[1] A MS. note by S. T. Coleridge on *Par.* i. 36–50 in the British Museum is, I think, worth quoting, as showing the estimate which he had formed of it:—

"Admirably translated. Oh, how few will appreciate its value. Genius is not alone sufficient It must be present indeed in the translator, in order to supply a negative test by its sympathy, to feel that it has been well done. But it must be Taste, Scholarship, Discipline, Tact, that must do it."

One point at least was gained by Cary's translation. From that time forward no man aiming at literary reputation thought his education complete unless he had read Dante in Cary or in the original. The name became a household word, often quoted even where the man and his works were but little known. Well-nigh every review and magazine of more than ephemeral character had from time to time its article on Dante. Among those who led the way to a more critical study of the poet, S. T. Coleridge holds a prominent place. His remarks on Dante (*Lectures*, ii. 93–108) deserve recognition as being the first attempt at an estimate of the Florentine poet from the standpoint of a higher wisdom than that of the critics of similes and phrases.

I extract a few of the most striking passages from his *Lectures* (ii. 93–100):—

"Dante is the living link between religion and philosophy. He philosophised the religion and Christianised the philosophy of Italy.

* * * * *

"The Greeks changed ideas into finites, and these finites into anthropomorphs. Their religion, their poetry, their very pictures, became statuesque. With them the form was the end. The reverse of this is found in Christianity: finites, even the human form, must be brought into connection with,

[1] For Coleridge's connection with Cary see the *Life* of the latter, or the article "Cary" in the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

and be symbolical of, the infinite, and hence arose a combination of poetry (1) with doctrine and (2) with sentiment.

* * * * *

"You cannot read Dante without feeling a gush of manliness of thought within him.

* * * * *

"The topographic reality of Dante's Hell is one of his great charms. He takes the thousand delusive forms of a nature worse than chaos and compels them into the service of the permanent.

* * * * *

"Dante becomes grotesque from being too graphic without imagination, as, *e.g.*, in his *Lucifer* as compared with Milton's *Satan*. He substitutes the μισητόν for the δεινόν of Longinus."

A less thorough-going admiration, not unmixed with the tendency to cavil at a greatness which he could not measure, found expression in Leigh Hunt's *Stories from the Italian Poets*. He shrinks, in real or affected horror, from the terrible descriptions of the *Inferno*. "Enough, enough, for God's sake! Take the disgust out of one's senses, O flower of true Christian wisdom and charity, now beginning to fill the air with fragrance." A somewhat fairer criticism adds, as one of Dante's characteristics, that "he has the minute probabilities of a Defoe in the midst of the loftiest and most generalising poetry," but the judge finally sums up against the defendant, and decides that "he wanted the music of a happy and happy-making disposition." What Leigh Hunt thus said in the lightness of his heart was uttered by Walter Savage Landor with characteristic vehemence. In his *Pentameron*, in an "imaginary conversation" between Boccaccio and Petrarch, he puts into the mouth of the latter a judgment which has not the faintest shadow of dramatic probability, and in which therefore we must see the writer speaking through a mask. From his point of view the *Inferno* is "the most immoral

and impious book ever written." It is the utterance of "personal resentment, outrageous to the pitch of the ludicrous, positively screaming." Dante himself is "a gratuitous logician, a preposterous politician, a cruel theologian." A poem on Dante in the *Last Fruit from an Old Tree*, however, gives, it should be added, a more reasonable judgment.

A few fragmentary notices from celebrities of the first half of the present century are, perhaps, worth remembering. Thus Lord Brougham tells the students of Glasgow in his *Inaugural Address* that there can be "no better training for pulpit or forensic eloquence than the verse that embodied the suffering of Ugolino and the scorn of Farinata." We think, not without satisfaction, of Robert Hall, as one of the great masters of that pulpit eloquence, finding in the *Commedia* something more than an education in rhetoric, and gaining from it strength and refreshment during his long months of agonising pain. It is pleasant also to find that Sydney Smith took in his old age to the study of Dante.

The wide range of reading which was necessary for such a work as Hallam's *Literature of Europe* could scarcely help including some knowledge of Dante. The date which he took as his starting-point, A.D. 1400, excluded, of course, any systematic treatment of the poet's life and works, but in the general survey of European literature with which the book opens, he names Dante and Petrarch as the "morning stars" of our modern literature, the latter "having as much the advantage over the former in his influence over the taste of his age as he was his inferior in depth of thought and creative power" (i. 56). He notes the influence of Dante in the revival of classical studies. "Those were ready for the love of Virgil who had formed their sense of beauty by the figures of Giotto

and the language of Dante. The subject of Dante is truly mediæval, but his style, the clothing of poetry, bears the strongest marks of his acquaintance with antiquity" (i. p. 143).

A comparison between Milton and Dante (iv. 421) is, I think, worth quoting at length:—

"To Dante, however, he (Milton) bears a much greater likeness. He has in common with that poet a uniform seriousness, for the brighter colouring of both is but the smile of a pensive mind, a fondness for argumentative speech, and for the same strain of argument. This indeed proceeds in part from the general similarity, the religious, and even theological, cast of their subjects: I advert particularly to the last part of Dante's poem. We may almost say, when we look to the resemblance of their prose writings, in the proud sense of being born for some great achievement, which breathes through the *Vita Nuova*, as it does through Milton's earlier treatises, that they were twin spirits, and that each might have animated the other's body; that each would, as it were, have been the other, if he had lived in the other's age. . . . Yet even as religious poets, there are several remarkable distinctions between Milton and Dante. It has been justly observed that, in the *Paradise* of Dante, he makes use of but three leading ideas—light, music, and motion, and that Milton has drawn Heaven in less pure and spiritual colours. The philosophical imagination of the former, in this third part of his poem, almost defecated from all sublunary things by long and solitary musing, spiritualises all that it touches."

The more elaborate comparison of the two poets in Lord Macaulay's *Essay on Milton* is too long for reproduction, but some of the more striking passages are worth transcribing:—

"The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differ from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. . . However strange, however grotesque, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he

measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself.

* * * * *

"The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of spirit, that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the *Divine Comedy* we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflict of earth nor the hope of Heaven, could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, 'a land of darkness,' as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness. The gloom of his character discolours all the passions of men and all the face of Nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the eternal throne. All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek,[1] the haggard and woful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curl of the lip, and doubt that they belonged to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy."

We have traced the judgment passed on Dante by writers who were pre-eminently critics. It remains to inquire how far his fame was recognised by the greater poets of the first half of the present century, or his influence traceable in their writings. For the most part, he is simply conspicuous by his absence. In Wordsworth's *Poems*, so far as memory serves,

[1] Lord Macaulay wrote, it will be remembered, before the discovery of the Bargello portrait.

there will be found a couple of references to him. Southey just appeals to him as furnishing a precedent for his *Vision of Judgment*. Shelley, in his *Epipsychidion* shows himself acquainted with the poem of the *Vita Nuova*, and takes the close of *Canz*. xiv. as a preface-motto.[1] Of the poets of that period, Byron is the chief name which presents any striking links connecting it with Dante, and he, different as was the type of his own temperament and character, seems to have striven to enter into the mind and heart of the Florentine. In *Childe Harold* (iv. 57) we have the well-known stanza beginning:—

> "Ungrateful Florence! Dante sleeps afar,
> Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding shore."

In *Don Juan*, besides some cynical lines on Dante's

[1] Three passages from Shelley are brought to my notice by Dr. R. Garnett as these sheets are passing through the press:—(1) From the *Defence of Poetry*, "Dante understood the secret things of love even more than Petrarch. His *Vita Nuova* is an inexhaustible fountain of purity of sentiment and language, it is the idealised history of that period and those intervals of his life which were dedicated to love. His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which, as steps, he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause, is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry. The acutest critics have justly revered the judgment of the vulgar and the order of the great acts of the *Divina Commedia* in the measure of the admiration which they accord to the Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. The latter is a perpetual hymn of everlasting love. . . . The poetry of Dante may be considered as a bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and the ancient world. . . . Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet . . . Dante was the first awakener of entranced Europe; he created a language in itself musical and persuasive, out of a chaos of inharmonious barbarisms. He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning; the Lucifer of that starry flock which, in the thirteenth century, shone forth from republican Italy as from a heaven, into the darkness of a benighted world. His very words are instinct with spirit; each is as a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought; and many yet lie covered in the ashes of their birth, and pregnant with a lightning which has as yet found no conductor." (2) In the *Letters from Italy*, No. 3, he speaks of "one solitary spot" in Milan Cathedral, "where the light of day is dim and yellow under the storied window, which I have chosen to visit and read Dante there" (3) In *Letter* 102, written only twenty days before his death, he writes —"When she (Italy) becomes of her own accord full of genuine admiration for the final scene in the *Purgatorio* or the opening of the *Paradiso*, or some other neglected piece of excellence, we may hope great things." Here also, as in the case of Byron, we note the "gush of masculine energy" of which Coleridge spoke.

wife and his love for Beatrice (iii. 10, 11), we have (iii. 108) a reproduction of one of the most beautiful passages of the *Purgatorio* (viii. 1–6). His greatest and most elaborate effort, however, was in *The Prophecy of Dante*. He had visited Ravenna, and had breathed the breezes of its pine-forest. The *genius loci* was strong upon him, and led to thoughts which found utterance in *The Prophecy of Dante* (June 1819), and later on to a translation of the Francesca episode in *terza rima* (March 1820). The *Prophecy* is also written in that metre, and is in four cantos, each of nearly 200 lines. It is significant of the delight which he felt in the new, and, we may believe, for a time, ennobling and purifying influence, that he sent it to his publisher as "the best thing he had ever done." We, at any rate, may note in it passages of a loftier tone than are to be found elsewhere in any of Byron's poems. Dante, it will be remembered, is throughout personated as the speaker :—

"I am old in days
And deeds and contemplation, and have met
Destruction face to face in all its ways
The world hath left me, what it found me, pure;
And if I have not gathered yet its praise,
I sought it not by any baser lure.

* * * * *

We can have but one country, and even yet
Thou'rt mine! My bones shall be within thy breast,
My soul within thy language, which once set
With our old Roman sway in the wide West;
But I will make another tongue arise
As lofty and more sweet, in which express'd,
The hero's ardour or the lover's sighs
Shall find alike such sounds for every theme,
That every word, as brilliant as the skies,
Shall realise a poet's proudest dream,
And make thee Europe's nightingale of song.

* * * * *

Many are poets, but without the name;
  For what is poesy but to create
  From over-feeling good or ill, and aim
At an external life beyond our fate,
  And be the new Prometheus of new men,
  Bestowing fire from heaven, and then, too late,
Finding the pleasure given repaid with pain,
  And vultures to the heart of the bestower,
  Who, having lavished his high gift in vain,
Lies chained to his lone rock by the sea-shore.
  So be it: we can bear."

"That strain we heard was of a higher mood." Byron rises above his Byronisms, and catches for a time what Coleridge has called the "inspiration of a masculine energy" rushing through his spirit. Critics may praise or blame the *Prophecy of Dante* as a work of art according to their measures. To me it is welcome as having for a time raised the unhappy English poet above himself, and brought him into sympathy with a loftier and purer soul. One or two sentences of a more direct critical estimate are worth quoting from his diary (January 29, 1821). He has been reading Frederick Schlegel's *Lectures on the History of Literature*, and comes across his judgment on Dante, in which he notes that the poet's "chief defect is a want, in a word, of gentle feelings." Then follows Byron's comment: "Of gentle feelings! and Francesca of Rimini, and the father's feelings in Ugolino, and Beatrice, and the Pia! Why, there is a gentleness in Dante above all gentleness, when he is tender. It is true that, treating of the Christian Hades or Hell, there is not much scope or site for gentleness; but who *but* Dante could have introduced any 'gentleness' at all into Hell? Is there any in Milton's? No; and Dante's Heaven is all love, and glory, and majesty."

The fact that Robert Browning chose as the subject

of his first great poem the Sordello who occupies so prominent a position in the *Purgatorio* of Dante, shows that he had been drawn in early life to a study of the *Commedia*. Whatever view we take of the researches which led him to create a history of Sordello so different from that which has been worked out by Dante commentators, he had at least grasped the thought that, of all the earlier poets of Italy, Sordello was the one who stood most closely in the relation of spiritual fatherhood to Dante:—

"For he—for he,
Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy
(If I should falter now)—for he is Thine!
Sordello, thy fore-runner, Florentine.
A herald star I know thou didst absorb
Relentless into the consummate orb
That scared it from its right to roll along
A sempiternal path with dance and song,
Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God?

* * * * *

Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutted Hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,
Unbitten by its whirling sulphur-spume—
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope
Into a darkness quieted by hope;
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye,
In gracious twilight, where His chosen lie."

—*Sordello*, B. i.

As a pendant to this I add a passage from the poetess whose name is so closely associated with that of the author of *Sordello*, alike by kindred genius and by the sacred life-ties of home — Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She is describing the gathering of the Florentines in 1848 as they addressed their Grand Duke Leopold with a demand for liberty:

"Whom chose they then? where met they?
On the stone
Called Dante's—a plain flat stone, scarce discerned
From others in the pavement,—whereupon
He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned
To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone
The lava of his spirit when it burned:
It is not cold to-day. O passionate
Poor Dante, who, a banished Florentine,
Didst sit austere at banquets of the great,
And muse upon this far-off stone of thine,
And think how oft some passer used to wait
A moment in the golden day's decline
With 'Good-night, dearest Dante!'—Well, good-night!"
—*Casa Guidi Windows.*

The early poems of Lord Tennyson present here and there indications that he too was "drawing light" as in a "golden urn" from the great well-spring of the fourteenth century. So in his *Palace of Art*, along with Milton and Shakespeare, there is a third—

"And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled"

In the *Ulysses* we have the tribute of a half-conscious reproduction of the leading thought of *H.* xxvi. 91–142. The well-known passage in Lucretius—

"Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
Processit longe flammantia mœnia mundi,"

will be felt to be true in the highest degree of the master-poet of Florence. The writer of the *Idylls of the King* must have felt in sympathy with the poet to whom the names of Lancelot and Guinevere and Modred and Merlin were familiar things. The sex-centenary festival of 1865 drew forth a more direct utterance, which I have already quoted in p. 125.[1]

[1] Mr. Matthew Arnold's article on Dante and Beatrice in *Fraser's Magazine* (lxvii. 1863) is chiefly occupied in examining Sir Theodore Martin's theory as to the *Vita Nuova*. In it he pronounces judgment alike against the allegorists, who see in Beatrice only the symbol of Philosophy

The student of the history of religious thought in England, who sees how closely the estimate which men have formed of Dante has been associated in the past with their political and religious convictions, can scarcely fail to ask how far there has been a like association among ourselves. Of the three great schools which popularly represent the phases of religious thought among us, that of Evangelical Protestantism may be passed over with but a cursory notice. It may be my misfortune or my fault, but I cannot call to mind any prominent writer of the Evangelical School who makes even a passing reference to the *Commedia*.[1] All that I can do is to note the fact that an intelligent and appreciative review of the first volume of this translation in the *Record* of December 24, 1886, shows that the influence of Dante has at last penetrated even into the regions which seemed least open to it. Putting aside all that refers to the translation as such, I quote with satisfaction words in which the writer utters his own feeling as to the original:

or Heavenly Wisdom, and against those at the opposite pole, who, like Sir Theodore Martin, think of her as, in Wordsworth's language—

"The perfect woman, nobly planned,
To help to comfort, and command,"

and who "try to find a Dante admirable and complete in the life of the world as in the life of the spirit, and when they cannot find him, invent him." He rejects the theory that "Dante *must* have proposed to Beatrice," and that Gemma married with a perfect and sympathising knowledge of all the past. This seems to him to sin against the canon that "art requires a basis of fact, and then the freest handling," to be "a mere imagining, singularly inappropriate to its object." The "grand impracticable solitary" is "transformed into the hero of a sentimental but strictly virtuous novel." "Beatrice was to Dante at twenty-one more a spirit than a woman, at twenty-five still more a spirit, and at fifty a spirit altogether." "To him all things are hollow and miserable compared with the divine vision. Every way which does not lead to this is a *via non vera*"

[1] Mr. Garbett, whose election as Professor of Poetry at Oxford against Isaac Williams was once looked on as a triumph of Evangelical Protestantism, ought perhaps to be named as an exception. He was, I believe, an Italian scholar and a student of Dante; but I am not acquainted with his professorial lectures, and have no access to them as I write.

"The world has moved, as Galileo showed, and in the region through which it is moving now there are visions better than Dante's, truer than some of his. There is clear gain permanently made sure to men: but there is loss as well as gain, and that loss is likely to be felt more and more to be loss as Christian wide-mindedness increases, and the eyes of men are purged, like the eyes of God, 'in every place beholding the evil and the good.' . . . We believe that in this book we have probably made a life-long friend, whose silent friendship will be no mean aid in discriminating when things differ between evil and good, between the false and the true, and in discerning in what and in whom chiefly are to be found the virtue and the praise about which Christians are to think, and towards which, through whatever winding of the pathway, they are to pass on."

With the school of thought which popular feeling has ticketed the Broad, the case stood far otherwise. They had learnt to recognise the elements of truth, the aspects of beauty manifested in the history of Christendom in its progress through the ages. I have already given quotations from S. T. Coleridge, who may be fairly taken as one of the earliest representatives, if not of the school, yet of the leading spirits of the movement, showing what he thought of Dante. Next in order of time and eminence I place Julius Charles Hare. His wide culture embraced Dante, but I do not know that he was ever distinctly a Dante student. As it is, I find but one passage bearing upon the subject of the present essay:

"This is what I meant by speaking of the ἄσπετος αἰθήρ of Greek literature. The Greeks saw what they saw thoroughly. Their eyes were piercing, and they knew how to use them and trust them. In modern literature, on the other hand, the pervading feeling is that we see through a glass darkly, while with the Greeks the unseen world was the world of shadows. In the great works of modern times there is a more or less conscious feeling that the outward world of the eye is the world of shadows, that the tangled web of life is to be swept away, and that the invisible world is the only abode of true, living realities. How strongly is this indicated by the two

great works which stand at the head of ancient and of Christian literature, the Homeric poems and the *Divina Commedia?* While the former teem with life, like a morning in spring, and everything in them, as on such a morning, has its life raised to the highest pitch, Dante's wanderings are all in the regions beyond the grave. He begins with overleaping death and leaving it behind him, and to his imagination the secret things of the next world and its inhabitants seem to be more distinctly and vividly present than the persons and things around him" (*Guesses at Truth*, p. 67, ed. 1866).

It is not without a sense of disappointment that I note the fact that I do not find the slightest allusion to Dante in the writings of Thomas Arnold. The same conspicuousness of absence characterises, so far as my memory serves me, the published writings of Dean Stanley; and, with the exception of a passing notice of Rossetti's theories in a letter, I do not remember any Dante utterance from the pen of Connop Thirlwall.

It is not easy to make any positive assertion as to allusions that may be found written in the numerous works of Frederick Maurice, most of them without an index A single passage in his *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* (i. p. 674, ed. 1872) is, however, enough to show his insight into Dante's character and his capacity for interpreting his writings. The reader will, I think, agree with me in wishing that he had written much more. He has given twelve pages to the life and teaching of Raymond Lully, and then he proceeds:—

"There was another far grander spirit than Raymond's which was passing at the same time through a very similar crisis. Dante Alighieri was changed from a Guelph into a Ghibelline. Dante Alighieri, the most earnest theologian of his time, found the persecuted Manfred in Purgatory, and some Popes in one of the most hopeless circles of the world below. Yet no one more thoroughly honoured the founders of the Mendicant Orders. The Dominican Aquinas in the

Paradiso celebrates the praises of St. Francis. He himself proved his claim to be the Angelic Doctor by untying, there as here, the most subtle knots of the intellect. But the poet who listened with delight to those solutions is the poet of Florence and of Italy; the transcendental metaphysician never for an instant forgets the sorrows of the actual world in which he is living; the student sustains the patriot. Drenched in the school lore, it is still the vulgar eloquence, the speech of the people, that is dear to him. Virgil is his master because Virgil was a Mantuan and sang of Italy. And neither theology, politics, nor the study of ancient song crushes the life of the individual man. Fervent human love was the commencement to the poet of a new life. Through the little child of nine years old he rises to the contemplation of the Divine charity which governs all things in heaven and subdues earth to itself.

"Wise men of our own day have said that Dante embodies the spirit of the mediæval time and is a prophet of the time which followed. We testify our assent to that remark by accepting his poem, coeval as it is with the great judgment of the Papacy under Boniface, with the practical termination of the religious wars, and with the rise of a native literature, not only in the South, but in the North, as a better epoch from which to commence the new age of European thought than the German reformation of the sixteenth century. That we do not think less of that mighty event than those do who suppose that it winds up the scholastic period, we trust that we shall be able to show hereafter. But its real importance for philosophy as well as humanity, we think, is imperfectly appreciated when it is looked upon as a new starting-point in the history of either. There is a danger also lest our Northern and Teutonic sympathies, which ought to be very strong, which cannot be too strong if they do not lead us to forget that God is the King of the whole earth, may make us unmindful of the grand place which Italy has occupied, and we trust is one day again to occupy, in the annals of mankind. We have no disposition to set Thomas of Aquino above Albert the Suabian or Roger Bacon of Ilchester, still less have we any disposition to exalt the fourteenth century above the sixteenth. But the Florentine poet may be taken as a hopeful augury that better things are in reserve for the nineteenth century than for either; that in place of the false universalism, which he felt inwardly to be an incubus upon his country and upon mankind, a true universal society—such

as he longed for on earth and had the vision of in Heaven—may yet include England, Germany, and Italy within its circle"

But of all the writers who, as separating themselves from the other two sections of Christian thought, may be grouped as among the leaders of the Broad Church school, none occupies so prominent a position in regard to Dante as Henry Hart Milman, Dean of St. Paul's. The author of *Belshazzar's Feast*, the translator of Æschylus and Horace, had all that was necessary of scholarly and poetic culture to enable him to appreciate the great Florentine as a poet. The historian of Latin Christianity had entered more fully than any man in England (it would not be rash to add "in Europe") into the history of mediæval thought. No previous writer had entered as he did into the idealism of the *De Monarchiâ* (*L. C.* vii. pp. 314–317), or traced so fully the relation of the *Commedia* to the popular traditions of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise (*L. C.* ix. pp. 88–96).

"All these," he says, speaking of the earlier visions of the unseen world, "interest only as they may be supposed to appear to have been faint types of the great Italian poet. Dante is the one authorised topographer of the Mediæval Hell" (*L. C.* ix. p. 89)

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"That in all the Paradise of Dante there should be a dazzling sameness, a mystic indistinctness, an inseparable blending of the real and the unreal, is not wonderful, if we consider the nature of the subject, and the still more incoherent and incongruous conceptions which he had to represent and to harmonise. It is more wonderful that, with these few elements, Light, Music, and Mysticism, he should, by his singular talent of embodying the purely abstract and metaphysical theology in the liveliest imagery, represent such things with the most objective truth, yet without disturbing their fine spiritualism. The subtlest scholasticism is not more subtle than Dante. It is perhaps a bold assertion, but what is there on these transcendent subjects, in the vast

theology of Aquinas, of which the essence and sum is not in the *Paradiso* of Dante? Dante, perhaps, though expressing, to a great extent, the popular conception of Heaven, is as much by his innate sublimity above it as St. Thomas himself" (*L. C.* ix. p. 96).

At a later stage of his work Dean Milman formally estimates the influence of Dante on the language and literature of Europe. To transcribe what he thus wrote would be to reproduce what has been already said, perhaps more than once, in these volumes, but a few pregnant sentences seem worth quoting:—

"Christendom owes to Dante the creation of Italian poetry, through Italian, of Christian poetry It required all the courage, firmness, and prophetic sagacity of Dante to throw aside the inflexible bondage of the established hierarchical Latin of Europe" (*L C.* ix. p. 198)

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"To my mind there is a singular kindred and similitude between the last great Latin and the first great Italian writer, though one is a poet and the other a historian. Tacitus and Dante have the same penetrative truth of observation as to man and the external world of man They have the common gift of flashing a whole train of thought, a vast range of images on the mind by a few brief and pregnant words, the same faculty of giving life to human emotions by natural images, of imparting to natural images, as it were, human life and human sympathies; each has the intuitive judgment of saying just enough, the rare talent of compressing a mass of profound thought into an apophthegm, each paints with words, with the fewest possible words, yet the picture lives and speaks. Each has that relentless moral indignation, that awful power of satire, which in the historian condemns to an immortality of earthly infamy, in the Christian poet aggravates that gloomy immortality of this world by ratifying it in the next. Each might seem to embody remorse. Patrician, imperial, princely, Papal criminals are compelled to acknowledge the justice of their doom. Each, too, writing, one of times just past, of which the influences were strongly felt in the social state and fortunes of Rome, the other of his own, in which he had been actively concerned, throws a personal passion (Dante, of course, the most) into his judgments and his language, which,

whatever may be its effect on their justice, adds wonderfully to their force and reality. Each, too, has a lofty sympathy with good, only that the highest ideal of Tacitus is a death-defying Stoic or an all-accomplished Roman Proconsul, an Helvidius Thrasea or an Agricola, that of Dante a suffering, and so purified and beatified, Christian saint or martyr; in Tacitus it is a majestic and virtuous Roman matron, an Agrippina, in Dante, an unreal mysterious Beatrice."

Of all the schools of religious thought in England in our own time, none seemed so likely to look on Dante with more reverence and interest than that which is commonly identified with the so-called Oxford movement. That movement differed from the Evangelical in the greater width of its sympathies, in its wider culture, in its recognition of the continuity of the Church's unity, and of the great work accomplished by the thinkers and rulers, not only of early but of Mediæval Christendom. As in the parallel movement in France and Germany, it would have been natural to expect that its leaders would have looked to Dante as one who represented a theology which, as a whole, they regarded with respect, whose work as a poet rested on the creeds of Christendom, who sought to raise men to a higher standard of Christian holiness. Of two of the great leaders of the school in its earlier stages, however, it may be said that they show no traces of Dante's influence. Pusey was wanting in the poetic element; his Hebrew, patristic, and Anglican studies, the controversial works which flowed so freely from his pen, occupied his mind and time. J. H. Newman comes before us as offering an unconscious parallelism with Dante rather than as showing any traces of his influence. The *Dream of Gerontius* unites in a manner altogether Dantesque the elements of demonic grotesque, scholastic subtlety, and mystic tenderness. The narrative of the *Apologia pro Vitâ Suâ* shows the same restless craving for an ideal polity

as that which we find in the *De Monarchiâ*, the same retrospective self-analysis as that which meets us in the *Convito*. Even the features and expression of the Cardinal present, if I mistake not, a marked likeness to those of the poet. On the other hand, Newman was not an Italian scholar, and had never read the *Commedia* in the original—had only tried, with partial success, to read Cary's translation of it. Altogether, therefore, it may be said of him—I speak of the past life which is *publici juris*—that he is too like Dante to have been, in any sense, a copy.

With the third member of the great Oxford triad the case was different. The author of the *Christian Year* was a poet with a poet's culture. If he had not studied Dante in Italian—of this I have no evidence—he at least knew him well through translations. His office as Professor of Poetry at Oxford led him to analyse the sources and the nature of the influence of some at least of the great poets of the world, and Dante was one of them. The very title which he gave to his published *Prælectiones*, "*De Poeticæ Vi Medicâ*," showed how closely he connected the artistic work of the poet with the therapeutic treatment of the soul. An Italian quotation in an article on *Sacred Poetry* in the *Quarterly Review* (vol. xxxii.) shows that he could read Dante in the original. A passage from that article is worth quoting, though not bearing specifically on Dante, as showing the temperament which would qualify him to appreciate the *Commedia*:—

"If grave, simple, sustained melodies—if tones of deep but subdued emotion, are what our minds naturally suggest to us upon the mention of sacred *music*, why should there not be something analogous, a kind of plain chant, in sacred *poetry* also?—fervent yet sober, awful but engaging, neither wild and passionate nor light and airy, but such as we may with submission presume to be the most acceptable offering in its kind, as being indeed the truest expression of the best state

of the affections. . . . Ἔνθεον ἡ ποίησις, it is true; there must be rapture and inspiration, but these will naturally differ in their characters as the powers do from which they proceed. The worshippers of Baal may be rude and frantic in their cries and gestures; but the true prophet, speaking to or of the true God, is all dignity and calmness."

Later on there is a distinct comparison between Milton and Dante in their descriptions of Heaven which seems to me eminently characteristic.

"The one as simple as possible in his imagery, producing intense effect by little more than various combinations of *three* leading ideas—light, motion, and music—as if he feared to introduce anything more gross and earthly, and would rather be censured; as doubtless he often is, for coldness and poverty of invention. Whereas Milton, with very little selection or refinement, transfers to the immediate neighbourhood of God's throne the imagery of Paradise and earth"

But it is to the *Prælectiones* that we must look for a more deliberate estimate of Dante. He names him as a writer of sonnets "*quo nemo severius scripsit, nemo religiosius*" (ii. 474). He draws a suggestive parallelism between him and Lucretius, some of whose magnificent descriptions of nature he quotes as a proof of his truthfulness and vividness:—

"Quid si docebo, tale aliquid evenisse apud alium quoque poetam, qui proxime omnium tangere videatur Lucretium, quod ad ea attinet, quæ obscura sunt et infinita. Intelligo Florentinum illum, triplici carmine nobilem, de triplici mortuorum statu. Quanto ille vir splendidissimæ poeseos apparatu variaverit instrumentum satis per se exile, partim musicorum modorum, partim radiorum supernæ lucis, partim nescio quo orbe mirifice saltantium novit unusquisque, qui primis modo labiis fontem ejus plane divinum hauserit.

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"Jam vero, cui suffecit ut plurimum supellex adeo brevis et angusta, idem alioqui significat se non modice delectari sylvarum flexibus, obscuroque ac dubio per nemora et saltus itinere, velut ubi, sub ipso operis initio, narrat se via erravisse in valle nescio qua sylvestri et horrida; vel multo etiam magis

in suavissimo carmine quo terrestris adumbratur Paradisus. . . .

"Immo etiam, ut id quod sentio dicam, qui Dantem in deliciis habent, non aliâ, maximam partem, voluptate fruuntur, atque ii qui per nemora avia gradiuntur, incerti quid quoque tempore futurum sit obvium Adeo non incredibile videtur id quod in Lucretio modo docebam; si quem commovere soleant amore quodam obscuræ et infinitæ res, eidem scriptori cordi fore non apertum modo æquora, ignesque sidereos, verum etiam nubium profunda et secretos sylvarum calles" (pp. 678, 679).

Lastly, in speaking of the influence exercised by Virgil on later poets as an ethical teacher, he writes:—

"Apud illos certe omnes unice ferme dominatus est Virgilius. Illum admirantur; eximia quoque quæque ab illius scriptis recitare amant, illi præ choro universo ethnicorum absque controversia primum tribuunt locum. Quid quod laudatissimus ille Dante, primarius non solum poeta verum etiam Theologus, Maronem potissimum eligit, quem ducem sibi adhiberi per arcana et infima loca" (p 805).

It will be admitted, I think, that these extracts show the mind of one in sympathy with Dante, that where they fall on congenial soil they would be likely to spring up and bud and blossom and bear fruit. They find, at least, a late echo in the words of one who was then conspicuous among the leaders of the Oxford School. In a letter commendatory of Father H. S. Bowden's translation of Hettinger's work on Dante's *Divina Commedia, its Scope and Value*, Cardinal Manning says:—

"There are three works which always seem to me to form a triad of Dogma, of Poetry, and of Devotion,—the *Summa* of St. Thomas, the *Divina Commedia*, and the *Paradisus Animæ*[1] All three contain the same outline of the Faith. St Thomas traces it on the intellect, Dante upon the imagination, and the *Paradisus Animæ* upon the heart The poem unites the

[1] A Manual of Devotional Exercises by Horstius.

book of Dogma and the book of Devotion, clothed in conceptions of intensity and of beauty which have never been surpassed nor equalled. No uninspired hand has ever written thoughts so high in words so resplendent as the last stanza of the *Divina Commedia*. It was said of St. Thomas, '*Post summam Thomæ nihil restat nisi lumen gloriæ.*' It may be said of Dante, '*Post Dantis Paradisum nihil restat nisi visio Dei.*'" (p. xxvii.)

But probably among Keble's hearers, certainly among those who grew up under his influence, there was one who was to do more for Dante in leading men to understand, and therefore to revere him, than any writer of this century. Not in the sense of its being a topic of the day or making a sensation, but as marking the beginning of a new era in the study of the *Commedia*, the article on Dante by Dean Church in the *Christian Remembrancer*[1] for January 1850 may well be described, in a favourite phrase of our Teutonic neighbours, as "epoch-making." It is thorough, complete, exhaustive. But its very completeness and its length forbid any attempt to analyse it, and the high thoughts and noble temper that permeate the whole make it difficult to select quotations. I content myself with a few passages that are of the nature of the estimates which it is the object of this study to bring together, and start with the opening paragraph :—

"The *Divina Commedia* is one of the landmarks of history. More than a magnificent poem, more than the beginning of a language and the opening of a national literature, more than the inspirer of art and the glory of a great people, it is one of those rare and solemn monuments of the mind's power which measure and test what it can reach to, which rise up ineffaceably and for ever as time goes on, marking out its advance by grander divisions than its centuries, and adopted as epochs by the consent of all who come after. It stands with the

[1] Republished in *Essays and Reviews*, by R W Church, M.A., 1854, and separately with a translation of the *De Monarchiâ* in 1881.

Iliad and Shakespeare's *Plays*, with the writings of Aristotle and Plato, with the *Novum Organon* and the *Principia*, with Justinian's Code, with the Parthenon and St. Peter's. It is the first Christian poem, and it opens European literature as the *Iliad* did that of Greece and Rome. And, like the *Iliad*, it has never become out of date, it accompanies in undiminished freshness the literature which it began.

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"The *Commedia* is a novel and startling apparition in literature. Probably it has been felt by some, who have approached it with the reverence due to a work of such renown, that the world has been generous in placing it so high. It seems so abnormal, so lawless, so reckless of all ordinary proprieties and canons of feeling, taste, and composition. It is rough and abrupt, obscure in phrase and allusion, doubly obscure in purpose. It is a medley of all subjects usually kept distinct —scandal of the day and transcendental science, politics and confessions, coarse satire and angelic joy, private wrongs with the mysteries of the faith, local names and habitations of the earth, with visions of Hell and Heaven. It is hard to keep up with the ever changing current of feeling, to pass, as the poet passes, without effort or scruple, from tenderness to ridicule, from hope to bitter scorn or querulous complaint, from high-raised devotion to the calmness of prosaic subtleties or grotesque detail. Each separate element and vein of thought has its precedent, but not their amalgamation. Many had written visions of the unseen world, but they had not blended with them their personal fortunes. St. Augustine had taught the soul to contemplate its own history, and had traced its progress from darkness to light,[1] but he had not interwoven with it the history of Italy and the consummation of all earthly destinies Satire was no new thing, Juvenal had given it a moral, some of the Provençal poets a political turn. St. Jerome had kindled with it fiercely and bitterly, even while expounding the Prophets, but here it streams forth in all its violence, within the precincts of the eternal world, and alternates with the hymns of the blessed. Lucretius had drawn forth the poetry of Nature and its laws; Virgil and Livy had unfolded the poetry of the Roman Empire, St Augustine, the still grander poetry of the City of God, but none had yet ventured to weave into one the three wonderful threads. And yet the scope of the Italian poet, vast and comprehensive as the issue of all things, universal

[1] See *Convito* i. 2.

as the government which directs nature and intelligence, forbids him not to stoop to the lowest caitiff he has ever despised, the merest personal association which hangs pleasantly in his memory Writing for all time, he scruples not to mix with all that is august and permanent in history and prophecy incidents the most transient and names the most obscure; to waste an immortality of shame or praise on those about whom his own generation were to inquire in vain.

* * * * *

"The 'Story of a Life,' the poetry of man's journey through the wilderness to his true country, is now in various and very different shapes as hackneyed a form of imagination as an allegory, an epic, a legend of chivalry, were in former times. Not, of course, that any time has been without its poetical feelings on the subject, and never were they deeper and more diversified, more touching and solemn, than in the ages that passed from St Augustine and St. Gregory to St. Thomas and St. Bonaventura But a philosophical poem, where they were not merely the colouring but the subject, an *epos* of the soul, placed for its trial in a fearful and wonderful world, with relations to time and matter, history and nature, good and evil, the beautiful, the intelligible, and the mysterious, sin and grace, the infinite and the eternal, and having, in the company and under the influence of other intelligences, to make its choice, to struggle, to succeed or fail, to gain the light or be lost—this was a new and unattempted theme. It has been often tried since, in faith or doubt, in egotism, in sorrow, in murmuring, in affectation, sometimes in joy, in various forms, in prose and verse, completed or fragmentary, in reality or fiction, in the direct or the shadowed story, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, in the *Confessions*, in *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*, in the *Excursion*. . . But it was a new path then, and he needed to be, and was, a bold man who first opened it—a path never trod without peril, usually with loss or failure."

I must allow myself one more extract, in which the writer sums up in noble words the moral influence of the study of Dante's poem :—

"Those who know the *Divina Commedia* best will best know how hard it is to be the interpreter of such a mind, but they will sympathise with the wish to call attention to it. They know, and would wish others also to know, not by hearsay, but by experience, the power of that wonderful poem. They

know its austere yet subduing beauty; they know what force there is in its free and earnest and solemn verse to strengthen, to tranquillise, to console. It is a small thing that it has the secret of Nature and Man; that a few keen words have opened their eyes to new sights in earth, and sea, and sky; have taught them new mysteries of sound, have made them recognise, in distinct image or thought, fugitive feelings, or their unheeded expression, by look, or gesture, or motion; that it has enriched the public and collective memory of society with new instances, never to be lost, of human feeling and fortune, has charmed ear and mind by the music of its stately march, and the variety and completeness of its plan. But besides this, they know how often its seriousness has put to shame their trifling, its magnanimity their faint-heartedness, its living energy their indolence, its stern and sad grandeur rebuked low thoughts, its thrilling tenderness overcome sullenness and assuaged distress, its strong faith quelled despair and soothed perplexity, its vast grasp imparted the sense of harmony to the view of clashing truth. They know how often they have found in times of trouble, if not light, at least that deep sense of reality, permanent though unseen, which is more than light can always give—in the view which it has suggested to them of the judgments and love of God."

The reader will scarcely, I think, wonder that I should have dwelt so fully on Dean Church's unsurpassed essay. On one, at least, of its readers it worked, as I have said in the Dedication to the *Inferno*, with an "epoch-making power." I never turn to it, even now, without the feeling that it anticipates well-nigh all that has been said by others since, and says it better than most of them.

But there was another in the circle of Oxford students [1] of that time who may not be passed over in this review of those who, in the matter of reverence and love for Dante, have been as those who "*quasi cursores, vitai lampada tradunt.*" Amid the wide

[1] An able review of Ozanam's *Dante et la Philosophie Catholique* in the *Christian Remembrancer* by Mr., now, I believe, Father, Dalgairns, deserves honourable mention in connection with the Dante literature of the Oxford movement.

range of interests which have occupied the leisure of Mr. Gladstone's life, Dante has held a place second only to Homer. How far he received the lighted torch from Mr. Keble or Dean Church I can only conjecture. It is true that he has not written much on Dante. A few references, by way of contrast, in his article on Leopardi (*Q. R.*, vol. lxxxvi.) show that he shared the admiration which the latter has so well expressed, that he had the power to appreciate as well as to admire. In the volume of translations by him and Lord Lyttelton (2nd edit., 1863), I find versions in triple rhyme of the Ugolino episode (*H.* xxxiii. 1–78), of the paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer (*Purg.* xi. 1–21), and of the speech of Piccarda (*Par.* iii. 70–87), which may well challenge comparison with any in the same form. The fullest acknowledgment, however, of the statesman's indebtedness to the poet is found in the letter to Signor Giambattista Giuliani, the author of *Dante spiegato con Dante*, published in the *Standard* of January 9, 1883 :—

"Albeit I have lost the practice of the Italian language, yet I must offer you many, many thanks for your kindness in sending me your admirable work. . . . You have been good enough to call that 'supreme poet' a 'solemn master' for me. These are not empty words The reading of Dante is not merely a pleasure, a *tour de force*, or a lesson; it is a vigorous discipline for the heart, the intellect, the whole man. In the school of Dante I have learnt a great part of that mental provision (however insignificant it be) which has served me to make the journey of life up to the term of nearly seventy-three years And I should like to extend your excellent phrase, and to say that he who labours for Dante labours to serve Italy, Christianity, the world"

It would not be difficult, I think, to show that there was in the characters of the two men something which gave to Dante's influence over the writer of this

letter the nature of an attraction of affinity. I will not enter into the debatable ground of politics; but apart from any question of the hour, it will, I believe, be admitted that what has distinguished Mr. Gladstone from most, if not from all, the other statesmen of our time, is that he has always been conspicuously the follower of an ideal. From the *Essay on the Relations of Church and State* to the last developments of Home Rule policy, there has always been the enthusiasm of a noble nature for the triumph of what seemed a loftier and more Christian polity than had obtained before. And in this I find that which brings him into fellowship with the author of the *De Monarchiâ.* The ideal may vary according to the changes of time and circumstance. Dante passed from the Guelph ideal to that of the Ghibelline, from the theory which made the Church supreme over the State to that which saw in the Empire the supreme remedy for the corruptions of the Church and the licence of the republics of Italy. Mr. Gladstone has passed from the old theory of a Church established by the State, recognised by it as the one authorised teacher of Divine truth, to the *imperium* of the new Democracy, in which, with no intervention of the State, each man hears, or forbears to hear, the Church's voice on his own responsibility. But what marks the character of the idealist statesman, as distinguished from the politicians of routine or party, is that he believes with all his soul in the ideal which for the time possesses him. This gives him an enthusiasm which commands the sympathy of millions. For it he gives up office or breaks up a party. He forms, in some sense a *parte per se stesso*, and learns to say, amid the criticisms of candid friends or the calumnies of opponents, *Lascia dir le genti*, and, in his belief that the cause for which he fights will over-

come all difficulties, reminds us, whether we share *the belief or not, of him of whom it was written* :—

> "*La Chiesa militante alcun figliuolo*
> *Non ha con più speranza.*"—*Par.* xxv. 52.

Of the other writers of our time who have influenced the minds of thoughtful readers, two stand out conspicuously as having written much of Dante, and with profound reverence and insight — John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle. The following extracts from passages scattered here and there through the many volumes of the former will, I think, be welcomed by most readers :—

"I have above said that all great European art is rooted in the thirteenth century, and it seems to me that there is a kind of central year about which we may consider the energy of the Middle Ages to be gathered, a kind of focus of time, which, by what is to my mind a most touching and impressive Divine appointment, has been marked for us by the greatest writer of the Middle Ages in the first words he utters, namely, the year 1300, the '*mezzo del cammin*' of the life of Dante."—*Stones of Venice*, ii 342.

"I believe that there is no test of greatness in periods, nations, or men more sure than the development, among them or in them, of a noble grotesque, and no test of comparative smallness or limitation, of one kind or another, more sure than the absence of grotesque invention or incapability of understanding it. I think that the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all at their highest, is Dante, and in him the grotesque reaches at once the most distinct and the most noble development to which it was ever brought in the human mind. . . . Of the grotesqueness in our own Shakespeare I need hardly speak, nor of its intolerableness to his French critics; nor of that of Æschylus and Homer, as opposed to the lower Greek writers; and so I believe it will be found, at all periods, in all minds of the first order."—*Stones of Venice*, iii. 158.

"The whole of the *Inferno* is full of this grotesque, as well as the *Faerie Queen*, and these two poems, together with the

works of Albert Dürer, will enable the reader to study it in its noblest forms, without reference to Gothic cathedrals."—*Stones of Venice*, iii. 147.

"Every line of the *Paradiso* is full of the most exquisite and spiritual expressions of Christian truth, and that poem is only less read than the *Inferno* because it requires far greater attention, and, perhaps, for its full enjoyment, a holier heart."—*Stones of Venice*, ii. 324.

"Milton's effort in all that he tells us of his Inferno is to make it indefinite, Dante's to make it *definite*. Both, indeed, describe it as entered through gates, but within the gates all is wild and fenceless with Milton, having indeed its four rivers—the last vestige of the mediæval tradition—but rivers which flow through a waste of mountain and moorland, and by 'many a frozen, many a fiery Alp.' But Dante's *Inferno* is accurately separated into circles drawn with well-pointed compasses, mapped and properly surveyed in every direction, trenched in a thoroughly good style of engineering from depth to depth, and divided in the 'accurate middle' (*dritto mezzo*) of its deepest abyss, into a concentric series of moats and embankments, like those about a castle, with bridges from each embankment to the next, precisely in the manner of those bridges over Hiddekel and Euphrates, which Mr. Macaulay thinks so innocently designed, apparently not aware that he is laughing at Dante.

"Now, whether this be in what we moderns call 'good taste' or not, I do not mean just now to inquire,—Dante having nothing to do with taste but with the facts which he had seen, only so far as the imaginative faculty of the two poets is concerned, note that Milton's vagueness is not the sign of imagination, but of its absence, so far as it is significative in this matter. . . . Imagination is always the seeing and asserting faculty. that which obscures or conceals may be judgment or feeling, but not invention. The invention, whether good or bad, is in the accurate engineering, not in the fog or uncertainty."—*Modern Painters*, iii part. iv. chap. xiv. pp. 29, 30.

I cannot resist quoting in conclusion the passage to which I have referred in the note on *Purg.* xxviii. 80, on the symbolism of Matilda and Leah:—

"This vision of Rachel and Leah has been always, and with unquestionable truth, received as a type of the Active

and Contemplative life, and as an introduction to the two divisions of the Paradise which Dante is about to enter. Therefore the unwearied spirit of the Countess Matilda is understood to represent the Active life, which forms the felicity of earth; and the spirit of Beatrice the Contemplative life, which forms the felicity of Heaven. This interpretation appears at first straightforward and certain, but it has missed count of exactly the most important fact in the two passages which we have to explain. Observe: Leah gathers the flowers to decorate *herself*, and delights in *her own* labour. Rachel sits silent, contemplating herself, and delights in *her own* image. These are the types of the unglorified Active and Contemplative powers of man. But Beatrice and Matilda are the same powers glorified. And how are they glorified? Leah took delight in her own labour; but Matilda—'in operibus *manuum Tuarum*'—*in God's labour*,—Rachel in the sight of her own face, Beatrice in the sight of *God's face*.

"And thus, when afterwards Dante sees Beatrice on her throne, and prays her that, when he himself shall die, she would receive him with kindness, Beatrice merely looks down for an instant, and answers with a single smile, then 'towards the eternal fountain turns.'"—*M. P.* iii. 224.

In Carlyle's *Lectures on Heroes* we may find the note of a truer, more appreciative estimate of Dante than had found utterance in Hallam and Macaulay. The fact that his brother, Dr. J. A. Carlyle, was translating the *Inferno* into prose had, we may well believe, led him to study the *Commedia* with the thoroughness which belonged to his nature when he gave himself to study anything. I content myself with quoting some of the more striking passages. It will be felt, I believe, that here also we note the purifying and ennobling effect of the influence of Dante on a soul that had at least the capacity for greatness and of reverence for that which stood out conspicuously in the past history of the world, as instance of the heroic possibilities of man's nature in contrast with its average low level or its equally possible debasement:—

"Many volumes have been written by way of commentary on Dante and his book; yet, on the whole, with no great result. His biography is, as it were, irrecoverably lost for us. An unimportant, wandering, sorrow-stricken man, not much note was taken of him while he lived, and the most of that has vanished, in the long space that now intervenes It is five centuries since he ceased writing and living here. After all commentaries, the book itself is mainly what we know of him. The book;—and one might add that portrait commonly attributed to Giotto, which, looking on it, you cannot help inclining to think genuine, whoever did it. To me it is a most touching face, perhaps of all faces that I know, the most so. Lonely there, painted as on vacancy, with the simple laurel wound round it, the deathless sorrow and pain, the known victory which is also deathless,—significant of the whole history of Dante! I think it is the mournfulest face that ever was painted from reality, an altogether tragic, heart-affecting face. There is in it, as foundation of it, the softness, tenderness, gentle affection as of a child, but all this is as if congealed into sharp contradiction, into abnegation, isolation, proud hopeless pain. A soft ethereal soul looking out so stern, implacable, grim, trenchant, as from imprisonment of thick-ribbed ice! Withal it is a silent pain too, a silent scornful one the lip is curled in a kind of god-like disdain of the thing that is eating out his heart,—as if it were withal a mean insignificant thing, as if he whom it had power to torture and strangle were greater than it. The face of one wholly in protest, and life-long unsurrendering battle, against the world. Affection all converted into indignation—an implacable indignation, slow, equable, silent, like that of a god! The eye too, it looks out as in a kind of *surprise*, a kind of inquiry, why the world was of such a sort? This is Dante. so he looks, this 'voice of ten silent centuries,' and sings us 'his mystic unfathomable song.'

* * * * *

"I give Dante my highest praise when I say of his *Divine Comedy* that it is, in all senses, genuinely a Song. In the very sound of it there is a *canto fermo*, it proceeds as by a chant. The language, his simple *terza rima*, doubtless helped him in this. One reads along naturally with a sort of *lilt*. But I add, that it could not be otherwise, for the essence and material of the work are themselves rhythmic. Its depth, and rapt passion and sincerity, makes it musical,—go *deep* enough, there is music everywhere. A true inward symmetry,

what one calls an architectural harmony, reigns in it, proportionates it all: architectural; which also partakes of the character of music. The three kingdoms, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*, look out on one another like compartments of a great edifice; a great supernatural world-cathedral, piled up there, stern, solemn, awful: Dante's World of Souls! It is, at bottom, the *sincerest* of all poems: sincerity, here too, we find to be the measure of worth. It came deep out of the author's heart of hearts, and it goes deep, and through long generations, into ours. The people of Verona, when they saw him on the streets, used to say, '*Eccovi l' uom ch' è stato all' Inferno*,—See, there is the man that was in Hell!' Ah yes, he had been in Hell,—in Hell enough, in long severe sorrow and struggle; as the like of him is pretty sure to have been. Commedias that come out *divine* are not accomplished otherwise. Thought, true labour of any kind, highest virtue itself, is it not the daughter of Pain? Born as out of the black whirlwind,—true *effort*, in fact, as of a captive struggling to free himself: that is Thought. In all ways we are 'to become perfect through *suffering*'—But as I say, no work known to me is so elaborated as this of Dante's. It has all been as if molten, in the hottest furnace of his soul. It had made him 'lean' for many years. Not the general whole only; every compartment of it is worked out, with intense earnestness, into truth, into clear visuality. Each answers to the other; each fits in its place, like a marble stone accurately hewn and polished. It is the soul of Dante, and in this the soul of the Middle Ages, rendered for ever rhythmically visible there. No light task; a right intense one: but a task which is *done*.

* * * * *

"Dante's painting is not graphic only, brief, true, and of a vividness as of fire in dark night; taken on the wider scale, it is every way noble, and the outcome of a great soul. Francesca and her lover, what qualities in that! A thing woven as out of rainbows, on a ground of eternal black. A small flute-voice of infinite wail speaks there, into our very heart of hearts. A touch of womanhood in it too, *della bella persona, che mi fu tolta*; and how, even in the pit of woe, it is a solace that *he* will never part from her! Saddest tragedy in these *alti guai*. And the racking winds, in that *aer bruno*, whirl them away again, to wail for ever!—Strange to think: Dante was the friend of this poor Francesca's father; Francesca herself may have sat upon the poet's knee, as a

bright innocent little child. Infinite pity, yet also infinite rigour of law: it is so Nature is made; it is so Dante discerned that she was made. What a paltry notion is that of his *Divine Comedy's* being a poor splenetic impotent terrestrial libel; putting those into Hell whom he could not be avenged upon on earth! I suppose if ever pity, tender as a mother's, was in the heart of any man, it was in Dante's But a man who does not know rigour cannot pity either. His very pity will be cowardly, egoistic,—sentimentality, or little better. I know not in the world an affection equal to that of Dante. It is a tenderness, a trembling, longing, pitying love like the wail of Æolian harps, soft, soft, like a child's young heart,—and then that stern, sore-saddened heart! These longings of his towards his Beatrice, their meeting together in the *Paradiso*, his gazing in her pure transfigured eyes, her that had been purified by death so long, separated from him so far —one likens it to the song of angels, it is among the purest utterances of affection, perhaps the very purest, that ever came out of a human soul.

"For the *intense* Dante is intense in all things, he has got into the essence of all. His intellectual insight as painter, on occasion too as reasoner, is but the result of all other sorts of intensity. Morally great, above all, we must call him, it is the beginning of all. His scorn, his grief are as transcendent as his love;—as indeed, what are they but the *inverse* or *converse* of his love? '*A Dio spiacenti ed a' nemici sui*,—Hateful to God and to the enemies of God' lofty scorn, unappeasable silent reprobation and aversion, '*Non ragioniam di lor*,' —We will not speak of *them*; look only and pass.' Or think of this; 'They have not the *hope* to die,—*Non hanno speranza di morte*.' One day, it had risen sternly benign on the scathed heart of Dante, that he, wretched, never-resting, worn as he was, would full surely *die*; 'that Destiny itself could not doom him not to die.' Such words are in this man. For rigour, earnestness and depth, he is not to be paralleled in the modern world; to seek his parallel we must go into the Hebrew Bible, and live with the antique Prophets there.

"I do not agree with much modern criticism, in greatly preferring the *Inferno* to the two other parts of the *Divina Commedia*. Such preference belongs, I imagine, to our general Byronism of taste, and is like to be a transient feeling. The *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, especially the former, one would almost say, is even more excellent than it It is a noble thing that *Purgatorio*, 'Mountain of Purification,' an emblem of the

noblest conception of that age. If sin is so fatal, and Hell is and must be so rigorous, awful, yet in repentance too is man purified, Repentance is the grand Christian act. It is beautiful how Dante works it out. The *tremolar della marina*, that 'trembling' of the ocean-waves, under the first pure gleam of morning, dawning afar on the wandering Two, is as the type of an altered mood. Hope has now dawned; never-dying Hope, if in company still with heavy sorrow. The obscure sojourn of dæmons and reprobates is underfoot; a soft breathing of penitence mounts higher and higher, to the Throne of Mercy itself"

* * * * *

"But indeed the three compartments mutually support one another, are indispensable to one another. The *Paradiso*, a kind of inarticulate music to me, is the redeeming side of the *Inferno*, the *Inferno* without it were untrue. All three make up the true Unseen World, as figured in the Christianity of the Middle Ages, a thing for ever memorable, for ever true in the essence of it, to all men. It was perhaps delineated in no human soul with such depth of veracity as in this of Dante's, a man *sent* to sing it, to keep it long memorable. Very notable with what brief simplicity he passes out of the every-day reality, into the invisible one, and in the second or third stanza we find ourselves in the World of Spirits; and dwell there, as among things palpable, indubitable! To Dante they *were* so, the real world, as it is called, and its facts, was but the threshold to an infinitely higher Fact of a World. At bottom, the one was as *preter*natural as the other. Has not each man a soul? He will not only be a spirit, but is one. To the earnest Dante it is all one visible Fact; he believes it, sees it, is the Poet of it in virtue of that. Sincerity, I say again, is the saving merit, now as always."

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"The uses of this Dante? We will not say much about his 'uses.' A human soul who has once got into that primal element of *Song*, and sung-forth fitly somewhat therefrom, has worked in the *depths* of our existence; feeding through long times the life-*roots* of all excellent human things whatsoever, —in a way that 'utilities' will not succeed well in calculating! We will not estimate the Sun by the quantity of gaslight it saves us, Dante shall be invaluable, or of no value."[1]

[1] A few words are due to the labours of some Dante students whom I have not space to quote, but whose works are well worth consulting:—(1) Mr. J. A. Symonds's *Introduction to the Study of Dante*, (2) Dr. H. C. Barlow,

V

FRANCE

ENGLAND was, as we have seen, the first among the nations of Europe to hold out the right hand of fellowship to the author of the *Commedia*, and to recognise his right to take his place among the great poets of the world. I know too little of early French literature to say whether there are any traces of a like recognition there. France may, however, claim to have been the first nation that produced a translator; not like Chaucer, of passages here and there, but of the whole of the great poem. In the year 1596 the Abbé Balthazar Grangier published "*La Comédie de Dante, de l'Enfer, du Purgatoire et du Paradis, mise en ryme françoise et commentée*," and dedicated it to Henry IV. As a specimen of the first translation of the *Commedia* into any modern European language, I quote the opening lines of *H.* iii. 1–9:—

"*Par mon moyen l'on va dans la cité dolente,*
Par mon moyen l'on va dans l'éternel desdain
Par mon moyen l'on va parmy la gent meschante

"*La justice poussa mon fondateur hautain,*
Et de ses mains me fit la divine puissance,
L'amour qui fut premier et la grand' sapience.

"*Créées devant moy, sinon les éternelles,*
Les choses ne sont pas, et ic dure eternel;
Delaissez tout espoir vous qui entrez rebelles."

The form chosen, as an approximation to the *terza rima*, is, it will be seen, a stanza of six lines, a quatrain

Contributions to the Study of the Divina Commedia; (3) Mrs. Oliphant's *Dante*; (4) the members of the Rossetti family, on whom, except as regards his special theory, the spirit of their father has descended in double measure —(*a*) D. G. Rossetti, *Dante and his Circle* and *Vita Nuova*, (*b*) Maria Rossetti, *Shadow of Dante*, (*c*) W. M. Rossetti, *Translation of the Inferno*.

terminated by a couplet. The notes are naturally taken chiefly from Italian commentators, of whom he names Landino. His own estimate of Dante, given in the Dedication, seems worth quoting:—

"En ce noble poème il se decouvre un Poète excellent, un Philosophe profond, et un Theologien judicieux, touchant avec un langage plus nerveux que mignard, toutefoys obscurement, quasi toutes les plus belles matières comprises aux sciences susdites. La façon de laquelle il use en ceste ditte Comédie est comme satyrique, attaquant toutes conditions de personnes, grandes ou petites."

Grangier aimed at a translation verse for verse and word for word, but his faithfulness took occasionally an eccentric form, and when he did not understand a passage, he transcribed it bodily into his version (*Rev. d. Deux Mondes*, Nov. 1840, p 437). In the judgment of Saint René Taillandier: "Malgré ses grâces naives et l'intérêt qui s'y attache, elle n'etait guère de nature à populariser le grand Florentin." I have not found any external traces of its influence, but it may possibly have served to make the *Commedia* acceptable to English readers who were not Italian scholars.

It is at all events significant, as pointing to the temporary eclipse of Dante's fame which we have traced in Italy and England, that nearly two centuries passed before the next version (this in prose) appeared from the pen of Moutonnet de Clairfons in 1776. The wars of the Fronde, the Renaissance classicality of the age of Louis XIV., the influence of the Jesuit reaction, were, it will easily be conceived, unfavourable to the study of a poet like Dante.

Voltaire, so far as I know, is the first writer who ventures on a critical estimate, and that estimate is sufficiently characteristic:—

"Vous voulez connaître le Dante. Les Italiens l'appellent divin. mais c'est une divinité cachée; peu des gens entendent ses oracles: il a des commentateurs; c'est peut-être encore une raison de plus pour n'être pas compris, sa réputation s'affermira toujours parce qu'on ne le lit guère. Il y a de lui une vingtaine de traits qu'on sait par cœur: cela suffit pour s'épargner la peine d'examiner le reste.

"Ce divin Dante fut, dit on, un homme assez malheureux. Ne croyez pas qu'il fut divin de son temps, ni qu'il fut prophète chez lui."

Then follows a short biography, with an account of his sojourn at Verona and Ravenna:—

"Ce fut dans ces divers lieux qu'il composa sa *Comédie de l'Enfer, du Purgatoire et du Paradis* on a regardé le salmigondi comme un beau poème épique."

Then, after a brief analysis of the opening cantos of the *Inferno*, he describes his entering the first circle of the condemned:—

"Le voyageur y reconnaît quelques cardinaux, quelques papes, et beaucoup de Florentins. Tout cela est-il dans le style comique? Non. Tout est-il dans le genre héroique? Non. Dans quel goût est donc ce poème? Dans un goût bizarre. . . On a fondé une chaire, une lecture pour expliquer cet auteur classique Vous me demanderez comment l'Inquisition ne s'y opposa pas. Je vous répondrai que l'Inquisition entend la raillerie en Italie, elle sait bien que des plaisanteries en vers ne peuvent point faire de mal."

By way of specimen of these "*plaisanteries*" he translates the episode of Guido di Montefeltro (*H.* xxvii.), or rather writes a Voltairean version of the story in the style of *La Pucelle*, interpolating, altering, and omitting at his will, and presents that as a "*traduction*" (Dict. Phil. *s. v. Dante*).

Symptoms of a revival began to appear in France, as in England, towards the close of the eighteenth century. In 1776 the *Inferno* was translated into prose by Moutonnet de Clairfons, and in 1783 by

De Rivarol, with notes. I have not seen the latter, and there is no copy in the library of the British Museum; but it is said to have "des morceaux remplis de mouvement, de style, de hardiesse, d'*estro* italien qui font beaucoup d'honneur à Rivarol" (Artaud). More interesting for our present purpose is his estimate of the work which he translates, from which I quote a few passages:[1]—

"Étrange et admirable entreprise! Remonter du dernier gouffre des enfers, jusqu'au sublime sanctuaire des cieux; embrasser la double hiérarchie des vices et des vertus, l'extrême misère et la suprême félicité, le temps et l'éternité; peindre à-la-fois l'ange et l'homme, l'auteur de tout mal, et le saint des saints. Aussi on ne peut se figurer la sensation prodigieuse que fit sur toute l'Italie ce poème national, rempli de hardiesses contre les Papes, d'allusions aux événements récens et aux questions qui agitaient les esprits, écrit d'ailleurs dans une langue au berceau, qui prenoit entre les mains du Dante une fierté qu'elle n'eût plus après lui et qu'on ne lui connoissait pas avant."

This indicates a somewhat greater capacity for entering into the mind of Dante than we have found in Voltaire, but he too is startled by the grotesqueness in which the *Inferno* is so rich:—

"D'ailleurs il n'est point de poète qui tende plus de pièges à son traducteur, c'est presque toujours des bizarreries, des énigmes ou des horreurs qu'il lui propose, il entasse les comparaisons les plus dégoûtantes, les allusions, les termes de l'école, et les expressions les plus basses: rien ne lui paroît méprisable, et la langue française, chaste et timorée, s'effarouche à chaque phrase. . . . Ce mélange d'événements si invraisemblables et de couleurs si vraies fait toute la magie de son poème. . . . Son vers se tient debout par la seule force du substantif et du verbe, sans le concours d'une seule épithète. . . . La plupart de ses peintures ont encore aujourd'hui la force de l'antique et la fraîcheur du moderne, et peuvent être comparées à ces tableaux d'un coloris sombre

[1] I take them from the longer extract in the *Illustrations to the Paradiso* given by Longfellow.

et effrayant, qui sortoient des ateliers des Michel-Ange et des Carraches, et donnoient à des sujets empruntés de la religion une sublimité qui parloit à tous les yeux."

He laments the incapacity of the eighteenth century to enter into the spirit of the *Commedia* :—

"Au reste, ce poème ne pouvoit paroître dans des circonstances plus malheureuses; nous sommes trop près ou trop loin de son sujet. Le Dante parloit à des esprits religieux, pour qui ses paroles étoient des paroles de vie, et qui l'entendoient à demi-mot mais il semble qu' aujourd'hui on ne puisse plus traiter les grands sujets mystiques d'une manière sérieuse. Si jamais, ce qu'il n'est pas permis de croire, notre théologie devenoit une langue morte, et s'il arrivait qu'elle obtînt, comme la mythologie, les honneurs de l'antique; alors le Dante inspireroit une autre espèce d'intérêt: son poème s'élèveroit comme un grand monument au milieu des ruines des littératures et des religions: il seroit plus facile à cette postérité reculée de s'accommoder des peintures sérieuses du poète, et de se pénétrer de la véritable terreur de son enfer on se feroit Chrétien avec le Dante, comme on se fait payen avec Homère."

About the third decade of the present century, however, an impulse was given to Dante literature in France more or less analogous to that which we have traced in connection with Rosmini, Manzoni, and Silvio Pellico in Italy, and with the Oxford movement in England. Rivarol's melancholy criticism, that the *Commedia* could not be rightly studied or appreciated till the theology of Christendom had become a thing of the past, was to be tested by a crucial experiment. It was in the movement of what may be called the Neo-Catholicism of France, neither Gallican nor Ultramontane, but aiming at an ideal which should reconcile the claims of liberty and science with loyalty to the faith of Christendom as represented by the teaching of the Latin Church, that Dante found a new company of devout scholars and admirers. The group of men who were prominent in that movement

included many illustrious names—Montalembert, Lacordaire, Ampère, Ozanam; as sympathising with it for a time, De Lamartine and the Abbé de Lamennais; as connected with it by literary rather than theological affinities, Fauriel and Quinet. It is noteworthy that nearly every one of those I have named did something to bring the name of Dante before the minds of their countrymen, or to give them the power of entering into his mind and heart with a fuller knowledge of his environment. Montalembert, in his *Monks of the West, from St. Benedict to St. Bernard*, led his readers to feel the power of the monastic spirit by which the poet was so largely influenced. De Lamennais, though at a later period he threw off his allegiance to the Church which he had hoped to reform according to his ideal, completed a prose translation into French, which was published in his *Œuvres Posthumes*, 1856. In the preface he gives an estimate which seems to show traces of the influence both of Ozanam and Rossetti. On the one hand, he accepts the theory of the latter that both the *Commedia* and the *Canzoniere* were written in a *gergo*, or cypher-language, intelligible only to the initiated; that Love represents not the classical Cupid or an ideal passion, but the principle of Ghibellinism; that the *fideles amoris* are, therefore, Ghibelline conspirators, and presses with some force the analogy of the Shulamite in the *Song of Solomon*, of Diotima in the *Symposium* of Plato, of Zuleika and Leila in the mystic poetry of Persia, in favour of that method of interpretation. On the other hand, he agrees with Ozanam in looking on Dante as a strictly orthodox follower of Aquinas. The notes to the poem are comparatively poor, and add little to one's knowledge.

A few passages more or less striking may be cited from the introduction:—

"Le poème entier, sous ses nombreux aspects, politique, philosophique, théologique, offre le tableau complet d'une époque, des doctrines reçues, de la science vraie ou erronée, du mouvement de l'esprit, des passions, des mœurs, de la vie enfin dans tous les ordres, et c'est avec raison qu'à ce point de vue la *Divina Commedia* a été appelée un poème encyclopédique."

It differs in this respect from the epics of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, with their well-defined subjects, complete within comparatively narrow limits. Dante's subject, however, immense as its range, embracing all theology and all known history, this world and the world to come, has yet its own limitations:—

"Dans cette vaste conception, Dante toutefois ne pouvait dépasser les limites où son siècle était enfermé. Son épopée est tout un monde, mais un monde correspondant au développement de la pensée et de la société en un point des temps et sur un point de la terre, le monde du Moyen Age."

Of Dante's language he writes:

"La netteté et la précision, je ne sais quoi de bref et de pittoresque, la distinguent particulièrement. Elle reflète, en quelque façon, le génie de Dante, nerveux, concis, ennemi de la phrase, abrégeant tout, faisant passer de son esprit dans les autres esprits, de son âme dans les autres âmes, idées, sentiments, images, par une sorte de directe communication presque indépendante des paroles. . . C'est qu'il ne cherche point l'effet lequel naît de soi-même par l'expression vraie de ce que le poète a pensé, senti. Jamais rien de vague, ce qu'il peint, il le voit, et son style plein de relief est moins encore de la peinture que de la plastique.

"Lorsque parût son œuvre, ce fut parmi ses contemporains un cri unanime d'étonnement et d'admiration, Puis de siècles se passent, durant lesquels peu à peu s'obscurcit cette grande renommée. Le sens du poème etait perdu, le goût rétréci et dépravé par l'influence d'une littérature non moins vide que factice."

He then quotes Voltaire's estimate and appreciates it at its right value.

"Voltaire, que ne savait guère mieux l'italien que le grec, a jugé Dante comme il a jugé Homère, sans les entendre et sans les connaître. Il n'eut, d'ailleurs, jamais le sentiment ni de la haute antiquité, ni de tout ce qui sortait du cercle dans lequel les modernes avaient renfermé l'art Avec un goût délicat et sûr, il discernait certaines beautés. D'autres lui échappaient. La nature l'avait doué d'une vue nette, mais cette vue n'embrassait qu'un horizon borné."

He adds, as from the standpoint of his own new conviction, that a "secret instinct" is leading men to substitute other thoughts for those of a system which the progress of thought and science has made effete, but that, whatever may be the doctrines which replace it, they too in their turn will be found to be the source of all true poetry, whose life is the life of the spirit.

We are tempted, when we find the name of Auguste Comte among the devout students of Dante, to ask: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Yet so it was. Among the strange anomalies of that eccentric genius we note the fact that he looked on the daily reading of a canto of the *Commedia* and a chapter of the *De Imitatione* as an almost essential element in the spiritual self-culture of the Religion of Humanity.

Of others, who did not renounce their first love, as De Lamennais, it may be sufficient to name Ampère, in whose *La Grèce, Rome et Dante*, we have the records of the pilgrimage of a devout worshipper to every place that had been made sacred by its association with Dante's life,[1] and Fauriel, who having qualified himself by a long series of labours in the history of Southern Gaul, of the crusade against the Albigenses, of Provençal poetry, published, in the first volume of his *Dante et les Origines de la Langue et de la Littérature Italienne*, an admirable biography of the poet,

[1] The *Voyage Dantesque* is well worth reading, and I may note a series of papers of a like nature, yet more interesting, written by Sarah F. Clarke under the title of *Notes on the Exile of Dante* in the *Century* magazine for 1882.

the work of a cultivated, intelligent, and reverent thinker, which may well hold its own even in face of the works of like nature by Scartazzini and Wegele.

But of all those whose devotion to Dante was united with the revival of aspirations after a life of holiness, as the fruit of a religious philosophy and a religion that could incorporate with itself whatever truth was brought to light by the advancing knowledge of the time, I know none whose character is at once so lofty and so winning as is that of Frederic Ozanam. In not a few points it seeems to me to present a parallel to that of Antonio Rosmini.[1] There is the same devout reverence for father and for mother, the same sensitiveness of conscience, the same aptitude for appreciating systems of philosophical or religious thought, the same stainless purity of life. There we might have said, with hardly the shadow of a risk of error, is a soul capable of entering into Dante's mind, certain to be attracted by it. And so it was. The earlier letters of the student soon give traces of the attraction. He visits Assisi and quotes *Par.* xi. 45–51 (p. 175). He enters on the work by which he was to be best known, his essay on *Dante et la Philosophie Catholique*, just at the time when he was passing through the heaviest sorrows of his life (p. 241). He accepts the tradition that Dante had studied at Paris and wonders whether Sigier was the Cousin of his time (p. 218). His work is to him "as a sweet and voluntary servitude," which, as his journey to Rome had done, "enchains his soul among ruins" (p. 228). He is encouraged by Lacordaire to continue his labours (p. 242). Silvio Pellico welcomes what he has said as to the "thorough Catholic philosophy of the

[1] I derive my knowledge from the translation of Ozanam's *Letters* by Ainslie Coates (1886). It may be hoped that the translator will complete his work as a second volume, the first stopping just in the most interesting part of Ozanam's career.

great poet as the most exact truth," and repudiates the "unhappy writers, contrary to the Church, who, blinded by their prejudices, have tried to make of Dante one of their patriarchs" (p. 246). On the strength of what he has thus written he is invited by Fauriel to share his work as Professor of Foreign Literature in the Sorbonne (p. 285).

The object of Ozanam's work was, as its title shows, to vindicate the character of Dante as a Christian philosopher, and this leads him to a full comparison of his teaching with that of Aquinas, such as had been followed out by Hettinger in Germany, and in England by Mr. A. J. Butler in his notes to his translation of the *Paradiso*. Like Dean Church's essay, the work is too complete to lend itself readily to quotations, but it is not too much to say that it is well-nigh indispensable to any one who wishes to enter into the deep things of the *Commedia*, and to understand Dante's attitude to the mysteries of the faith. It embodies the results of a vast range of studies. It is lighted up here and there by pregnant thoughts embodied in epigrammatic language.

For him, the homage paid to Dante by the Florence of our own time is of the nature of a "*culte expiatoire.*" He recognises the fact that Dante, though Aristotelian, is a Platonist in the essence of his thoughts, and so finds in him the reconciliation of the two (pp. 213–223). Dante is the "St. Thomas of poetry." He applies to the *Commedia* words that were written with a far different purpose, and describes it as

> "The child of love, though born in bitterness
> And nurtured in convulsions."

His ideal interpretation of the *Vita Nuova* leads him even to speak of Beatrice as having died "*dans la gloire éclatante de sa virginité.* Nor was this Ozanam's

only contribution to Dante studies. We owe to him the publication, in an appendix to his work of a *Vision of St. Paul*, throwing light on *H.* ii., another volume on *Les Poètes Franciscains en Italie, séries des recherches nouvelles sur les sources poétiques de la Divine Comédie* (1859).

Lamartine, as Ozanam's letters show, was at one time looked up to by the Neo-Catholic party. His books were "beautiful and good;" his political ideas "great and generous." He was at once a "philosopher and a poet." Ozanam had rarely seen a man "unite more noble qualities" (p. 115). There were elements in Lamartine's character, however, chiefly an inordinate egotism, which soon threw him out of sympathy with these admirers. When he published his *Voyage en Orient*, Ozanam then began to feel that there was a "little rift" that threatened to widen into a chasm. He was "so impressionable, that in traversing Asia he was impregnated, in part, with its ideas and tendencies." He gave "extreme praises to the Alcoran," and evidently was "departing from orthodoxy." All that could be said by those who would fain hope for the best was that his book contained no formal apostasy (p. 135).

What he wrote a few years later on Dante must have made the breach irreparable. He confessedly follows in the footsteps of Voltaire, and speaks in the accents of Leigh Hunt and Landor:—

"L'œuvre, jadis intelligible et populaire, aujourd'hui ténébreuse et inexplicable, résiste, comme le sphinx, aux interrogations des érudits, il n'en subsiste que des fragments plus semblables à des énigmes qu'à des monuments.

"Pour comprendre le Dante, il faudrait ressusciter toute la populace Florentine de son époque, car ce sont ses croyances, ses haines, ses popularités et ses impopularités qu'il a chantées. Il est puni par où il a péché il a chanté pour la place publique, la postérité ne le comprend plus.

"Tout ce qu'on peut comprendre, c'est que le poème exclusivement Toscan du Dante était une espèce de satire vengeresse du poète et de l'homme d'état contre les hommes et le partis aux quels il avait voué sa haine. L'idée était mesquine et indigne du poète. La génie n'est pas un jouet mis au service de nos petites colères; c'est un don de Dieu qu'on peut profaner en le ravalant à des petitesses."

He knows that he will shock the feelings of a whole literary school, but he claims, on the strength of having lived for some years in Italy, to be more competent to judge than they are. He sneers at Ozanam and his companions :—

"De jeunes Français se sont évertués maintenant à poursuivre ce qui a lassé les Toscans eux-mêmes. Que le Dieu de Chaos leur soit propice!

"Quant à nous, nous n'avons trouvé, comme Voltaire, dans le Dante, qu'un grand inventeur de style, un grand créateur de langue égaré dans une conception de ténèbres, un immense fragment de poète dans un petit nombre de fragments de vers gravés, plutôt qu'écrits, avec le ciseau de ce Michel Ange de la poésie, une trivialité grossière qui descend jusqu'au cynisme du mot, et jusqu'à la crapule de l'image; une quintessence de théologie scholastique qui s'élève jusqu'à la vaporisation de l'idée, enfin pour tout dire d'un mot, un grand homme et un mauvais livre."

The enthusiastic devotion that characterised the "romantic" school to which Ozanam belonged was wanting in an Edgar Quinet, and in its place we have a clear-visioned insight, and a calm though reverential estimate. I quote from *Les Révolutions d'Italie*, chap. vii.:—

"Comme dans chaque détail d'une cathédrale vous retrouvez le caractère de l'ensemble, de même dans chaque partie du poème de Dante vous retrouvez en abrégé toutes les autres. . . . Il y a dans l'Enfer des éclairs d'une joie perdue qui rappellent et entr'ouvrent le Paradis, il y a dans le Paradis des plaintes lamentables, des prophéties de malheur comme si le firmament lui même s'abîmait dans le gouffre, et que l'extrême douleur ressaisit l'homme au sein de l'extrême joie.

FRANCE

"Diviser par fragments le poème de Dante, comme on le fait ordinairement, c'est le méconnaître ; il faut au moins suivre une fois, tout d'une haleine, le poète dans ces trois mondes qui se touchent, embrasser d'un seul regard l'horizon des ténèbres et de la lumière, suivre le chemin de la torture qui mène à la félicité, recueillir tous les échos de douleur et de joie qui s'appellent sans trouver de résponse, et placé au sommet du poème, s'orienter dans la cité du Dieu et du Demon : il faut entendre une fois le *miserere* des damnés dans les fleuves de sang, en même temps que l'hosannah des bienheureux, puisque c'est de ce mélange que se forme l'accord complet de la *Comédie Divine*.

* * * * *

"Qu'est-ce donc que la *Comédie Divine?* L'Odyssée du Chrétien ; un voyage dans l'infini, mêlé d'angoisses et des chants des sirènes, un itinéraire de l'homme vers Dieu."

The name of M. Charles Labitte is chiefly memorable for the contribution he has made to Dante studies in his articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, subsequently published in a volume with the title *La Divine Comédie avant Dante*, and in the study on the *Genesis and Growth of the Commedia* I have acknowledged my indebtedness to that work. It lies in the nature of the case, however, that a man could not accomplish such a work without dwelling, more or less, on the relation of the poet to the predecessors whose works are analysed with so exhaustive a fulness, and one suggestive paragraph may well be quoted as a sample :—

"On ne dispute plus à Dante le rôle inattendu du conquérant intellectuel que son génie a su se créer tout à coup au milieu de la barbarie des temps L'auteur de la *Divine Comédie* n'est pas pour rien le représentant poétique du moyen âge. Placé comme au carrefour de cette ère étrange, toutes les routes mènent à lui, et sans cesse on le retrouve à l'horizon. Société, intelligence, religion, tout se reflète en lui. En philosophie il complète Saint Thomas ; en histoire il est le commentateur vivant de Villani ; le secret des sentiments et des tristesse d'alors se lit dans son poème.

C'est un homme complet, à la manière des écrivains de l'antiquité : il tient l'épée d'une main, la plume de l'autre ; il est savant, il est diplomate, il est grand poète. Son œuvre est un des plus vastes monuments de l'esprit humain ; sa vie est un combat ; rien n'y manque, les larmes, la faim, l'exil, l'amour, les gloires, les faiblesses. Et remarquez que les intervalles de son inspiration, que le sauvage dureté de son caractère, que l'aristocratie hautaine de son génie, sont des traits de plus qui le rattachent à son époque, et qui en même temps l'en séparent et l'isolent. Où que vous portiez vos pas dans les landes ingrates du moyen âge, cette figure, à la fois sombre et lumineuse, apparaît à vos côtés comme un guide inévitable."

M. Labitte writes, however, as having little or no sympathy with Ozanam and his friends :—

"Sans doute il y a sympathie en nous pour ce passé, mais nous sentons bien que c'est du passé. Soyons francs : la fibre érudite est ici autant en jeu que la fibre poétique, la curiosité est aussi éveillée que l'admiration. On est frappé de ces catacombes gigantesques, mais on sait qu'elles sont l'asile de la mort. En un mot, nous comprenons, nous expliquons, nous commentons : nous ne croyons plus. . . . Helas ! ce qui nous frappe surtout dans la *Divine Comédie*, ce sont les beaux vers. Aussi, rien ne fait du livre de Dante le poème de notre époque."

M. Labitte has, however, a special claim to distinction as a writer on Dante, as having given a characteristic analysis of the *Vita Nuova*, which had just been translated for the first time into French by M. Delecluze :—

"C'est le premier en effet de ces livres maladifs et consacrés à la subtile analyse d'une faiblesse, d'un penchant, d'une passion, c'est l'aîné de cette famille de Werther, de René, d'Obermann, d'Adolphe qui seront un produit, particulier et vraiment distinctif, des littératures modernes. Ces types vagues, souffrans, exaltés, dans lesquels des générations entières se reconnaissent, étaient à peu près ignorés avant le Christianisme.

"L'amour explique bien des choses dans la vie Italienne ;

il explique tout un côté du génie de Dante. C'est chez lui un sentiment tout nouveau, épuré pas le Christianisme, et où viennent se marier et se fondre par la poésie les souvenirs platoniques, la galanterie des cours d'amour et de la chevalerie, avec le mysticisme scholastique des théologiens. On est bien loin des roses de Tibulle, du moineau de Lesbie, et Anacréon ne reconnaîtrait plus cet amour, *vêtu de drap noir* (Sonn. xxiv.) qui ne sait que répéter: 'Elle est morte, ma dame est morte.'"

Of all the eccentricities of Dante exegesis, M. Aroux's *Dante Hérétique, Révolutionnaire et Socialiste* is perhaps almost and altogether the most eccentric. Its title sufficiently announces the thesis which he undertakes to maintain. But there is something touching in his account of the way in which he was led to his conclusions. He had studied Dante for ten years, and in 1842 had published a translation, as he pathetically confesses, without understanding him. He set to work again to revise his task, and his eyes were opened. A leading idea came before him which all subsequent studies confirmed and developed. He adopted—apparently by an independent process of inquiry, as he makes no mention of his predecessor—Rossetti's theory of a cypher-language. The *Vita Nuova* is the history of a secret Ghibelline society. The philosophy of Dante is that of Averrhoës; his theology that of the Abbot Joachim, the Fraticelli, the Cathari, the Paterini; of Fra Dolcino, of Manichæan and Albigensian heretics. The *invidiosi veri* of Sigier were that the world was eternal, that Christianity was a fable, that its doctrines were a hindrance to true knowledge, that the only wise men were the pantheistic philosophers, to whom faith was a thing indifferent (p. 6). The "ladies who have intelligence of love" (*Canz.* ii.) are "the chiefs of the Ghibelline sect, initiated in the highest degrees of the secret doctrine" (p. 45).

"Béatrice, disons-le de suite, est une entité métaphysique, elle est l'ensemble des doctrines syncrétiques de la Gnosis et de Manés repoussées, anathematisées par l'Église ; doctrine constituant la foi hétérodoxe, aux mystères de laquelle Dante avait été initié avec tant d'autres, que l'autorité ecclésiastique, si formidable alors pour qui s'attaquait à elle, base et sauvegarde de la société, réduisait à s'entourer de ténèbres. Béatrice est l'essence même de ces doctrines, leur philosophie, dont l'âme de Dante est imbue : elle est son âme elle-même, ne formant qu'un avec l'objet aimé. Cette âme, il l'a personifiée, il en a fait une trinité, en lui donnant intelligence, mémoire et volonté, en l'appelant Béatrice, Marie, et Lucie, puis il l'a fait parler et agir comme un être réel, en se complaisant dans son œuvre, en la contemplant en dehors de lui-même ; cette personnification il en est l'auteur, le *facteur*, elle est un miracle assurément, miracle d'audace, de ruse diabolique et de génie, tout dans le temple qu'il lui a édifié n'est que miracles, et c'est Dante, homme créé à l'image de Dieu, triple et un, comme lui, par l'intelligence, la volonté, et la memoire, c'est Dante qui est le *facteur des miracles ;* comme il est le Père, le Fils et l'Esprit de Béatrice, en qui il contemple sa sizygie, son Ennoia, son entéléchie, son *logos* ou son verbe"

That specimen may, I think, suffice. There is something edifying in the way in which, with this master-key in his hand, he leads his reader step by step, through all the poet's writings, opens all the secret treasures of wisdom and knowledge, reads between the lines whatever he was resolved to find there, and so remorselessly tears away the veil which had for six centuries concealed the features of the great heretic, the great revolutionist, one might almost say the Antichrist, of the fourteenth century. Ozanam and his friends are, from his point of view, blinded and self-deceived by their fanaticism. He does not name them, indeed, but they are clearly in his mind when he speaks of—

"Les fanatiques du grand poète, ceux qui s'agenouilleraient volontiers devant chaque mot tombé de la plume du digne et pieux Dante que nous connaissons . . . bon Catholique,

plein de dévotion pour la Sainte Vierge et affilié au tiers ordre de Saint François."

He has fathomed the mystery of iniquity; he will follow up his task by a new translation of the *Commedia* with new notes. Meantime he, as a faithful son of the Church, dedicates his book to Pius IX., as a "protestation contre l'erreur et le mensonge que le génie même ne saurait absoudre."

I have no means of ascertaining how the Pope received the book for which the sanction of his name was thus invoked. The letter of Cardinal Manning commending Father Bowden's translation of Hettinger's work (p. 455), which in fact reproduces Ozanam, is a sufficient proof that it has not found adherents among the leading representatives of Latin Catholicism. Pius IX. himself gave a practical answer to it when he laid a votive wreath on Dante's tomb at Ravenna.

The *Causeries Florentines* of M. Klackzo, a work of the type of Sir Arthur Helps's *Friends in Council*, presents some discussions of points in Dante's character and poems which will interest most students. The defect of the book is, as it seems to me, that it is too epigrammatic. The turn of a pointed phrase seems to have a fascination for the author which he cannot resist, even when it leads him to an untenable paradox. Some of the epigrams are, however, sufficiently suggestive, and I quote them as they meet me.

Dante is the representative "de toute la grande confrérie de la Passion"—"le saint patron *della citta dolente* des poètes et des artistes"—"un Titan foudroyé par le destin." . . . The words "*In dolore paries*" find their fulfilment in Michael Angelo and Dante. . . . The influence of Dante is traceable in Orcagna, Giotto, Fiesole (Fra Angelico), but not in Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment." . . . Dante is in all things the antithesis of Michael Angelo, reproducing all traditional lore, while the latter discards it. . . . The *Commedia* is the

one great completed work of the Middle Ages, in this happier than Cologne Cathedral or the *Summa* of Aquinas. . . . The *Commedia*, like a Gothic cathedral, is best seen in the moonlight of the soul. . . . Dante's influence is scarcely traceable in Italian literature. The amorous servitude of late Italian poetry has led to political servitude. . . . The *Inferno* makes a plastic impression, the *Purgatorio* a pictorial, the *Paradiso* a musical The first is characterised by its *bestiarium*, the second by its *flora*, the last by its stars. . . . "La Béatrice des sonnets nous fait l'irritante impression de l'anonyme et de l'enigme, du masque et du mythe, d'une personalité fictive, je dirais presque une entité hérétique." . . . Dante is the Homer of Catholicism—"le Newton poétique du monde surnaturel."

I end with a few words from Victor Hugo, sufficiently characteristic, which, however, I have been unable to trace to their source: "He knocks gravely at the door of the Infinite, and says 'Open, I am Dante.'"[1]

VI

GERMANY

THE comparatively late date at which Germany took its place in the commonwealth of European literature confines our present inquiry within correspondingly narrow limits. The first volume of Scartazzini's elaborate *Dante in Germania* is an imperial octavo of 312 pages, and of these pp. 9–31 contain all that has to be said on the subject, after an exhaustive and almost microscopic study, from the fourteenth century to 1824. The name of Dante occurs in Sebastian Brant's (*b.* 1458, *d.* 1521) edition of *Æsop's Fables*,

[1] A friend (C. J P) calls my attention to a passage in Victor Hugo's Preface to *Les Rayons et les Ombres* in which he says that "the Bible has been his book, Virgil and Dante his masters."

but without any evidence that his works were known. A treatise *De Dignitatibus*, by Bartolo da Sassoferrato, was published at Leipzig in 1493, dealing fully with the Canzone which forms the subject of the fourth book of the *Convito* (*Canz.* xvi.). Flacius Illyricus, one of the most vehement leaders of the Lutheran Reformation, published at Basle (1556) a *Catalogus Testium Veritatis*, in which Dante holds a prominent position, and all the passages in the *Commedia* and the *De Monarchiâ* which bear on the corruptions of the Roman Church are quoted in the original. It is significant enough that the same city witnessed in 1559 the publication of a German translation of the latter treatise by Heroldt, before any edition of the book had been printed in Italy. A short biographical notice based upon Boccaccio, in which the reader was told that Dante had written of Hell and Purgatory and Paradise and "many other beautiful things," may have tended to awaken an interest other than polemical. Anyhow, the next welcome is given as by a poet to a poet only or chiefly, not by reformer to reformer. In 1563 Hans Sachs, the shoemaker-poet of Nuremberg (*b.* 1494, *d.* 1576), tells the tale of Dante's life. The words of that welcome will be read, I think, with some interest as the first indication of the place which some three centuries later the poet of Florence was to hold in the minds of the thinkers and scholars of Germany. I give, I hope, a fairly adequate version :[1]—

"Alighierius, known as Dante,
Famous as a laureate poet,
In the town of Florence dwelt he,
Much by men revered and honoured,
But by troop of foes most bitter
Was his fair fame foully slandered.

[1] *Opp. Nar.* 1579, v. 2. The title of the poem is *Dantes, der Poet vo Florens.*

From the city him they banished:
Then at Paris long he tarried,
Student in the famous college.
There of Art he was the master,
Bard and poet nobly gifted.
Many a wondrous poem wrote he,
Notably a book that telleth,
With all full and subtle detail,
Things of Earth and Hell and Heaven;
These with artist's skill he painteth,
With keen insight gazing round him:
Poem that, still held in honour,
Studied much by many a scholar:
Then from France he took his journey,
And Can Grande gave him shelter."

There is nothing very lofty or in the grand style there. I do not think it probable that the writer knew more of Dante than he learnt from Heroldt's book, but the words have an honest ring in them, and show that he looked on the poet rather than the controversialist, and gave his greeting to the *sovrano poeta* as one who was a greater *Meister-singer* than he or any of his forerunners could claim to be.

As it was, however, the poet remained in the background of German thought, and Dante was still chiefly known as the author of the *De Monarchiâ.* Of that book four more editions were published between 1609 and 1618, while as yet not a single copy had issued from any Italian press.

The year 1755 was memorable for the first edition of the *Commedia* in Germany, edited by Niccolò Ciangulo and published at Leipzig, and, as a natural sequel, a volume of *Essays on the Character and Works of the Chief Italian Poets* by J. N. Meinhard (Berlin, 1763), in which 180 pages were given, it is said, with a fair measure of knowledge and insight, to those of Dante. The work was favourably reviewed

by Lessing. That critic, however, though he quotes *H.* ii. 7–9 in a criticism on Klopstock (*Lett.* ii. 17, p. 254, ed. 1841), does not appear to have been familiar with his writings, and has left nothing in the shape of an estimate. If he had, we may fear, looking to the dominant characteristics of the man, that it would have been somewhat after the manner of Voltaire.

In the matter of translation, however, Germany had the start of England in the prose version of the whole *Commedia* by Bachenschwanz in 1767, of the *Inferno* by Jageman in 1780. They have passed, as Boyd and Rogers have passed in England, into the region of oblivion, having done their little work of at least bringing the name of Dante within the horizon of German students. In spite of this, however, no trace of the Florentine poet is found in Schiller, not even in the prose writings, such as the essays on art, poetry or culture generally, in which such a reference to them would have naturally suggested itself to one who was acquainted with the poet's writings.[1] With Schiller's greater contemporary, there was in the earlier stages of his growth, the same absence of any reference to the poet of whom men now debate whether he or Goethe were the greatest, whom all admit to have been the representative poet of the *Zeitgeist* of his own time, as Goethe was partly of that of the eighteenth, yet more of that of the nineteenth century. The *Italienische Reise*, written *circ.* 1790, shows no trace of any wish to halt at Florence or Ravenna for the sake of the memories which made those cities sacred, and the traveller presses on to the classical and artistic interests of Rome and Naples.

[1] Scartazzini calls attention (p. 20) to the curious fact that Schiller and Goethe correspond in February 1798 on the merits of *terza rima* as a form for poetry, and that neither of them mentions Dante.

Even at Assisi he turns from the two churches with all their memories of St. Francis and Giotto without a word of notice, and hastens with a passionate classicalism to the Temple of Minerva, which stands in the piazza of that town. The mind of Goethe had, at an early age, cast off the traditional Protestantism of Germany. It had scarcely felt even the touch of artistic sympathy with the Catholicism of an earlier period, still less of any real reverence for the truths of which it was for a time the representative. He gave himself, eliminating the thought of God, eliminating any real sympathy with humanity, to the work which he pursued consistently through a long and prosperous life of self-culture. No two types of life and character could be more contrasted than those of the two poets of Weimar and of Florence. The former, like the latter, takes his place among the creative master-spirits of the world. He pursued his lonely pathway through the *avia Pieridum loca*, and wrote things hard to be understood. The *Faust* and the *Commedia* have this at least in common, that each is an instance of Goethe's own maxim that all great works are the growth of solitude; that each is the outcome of a man's life; that this is what he has to say as to the riddles of the world in which he lives. The last word of Dante, after a passionate and unselfish love, after devotion to a political ideal of righteousness, after accepting the faith of Christ and following it into all its traditional and scholastic developments, after claiming fellowship with the saints of God and with sinners who repented, after a life of poverty and exile, was found in the *Paradiso*. The last word of Goethe, after the wide experience of passions that were, to say the least, not unselfish, after the placid ease of Weimar, with scarcely a touch of self-forgetting love of country or of mankind, or of individual men and

women, from first to last, is found in the second part of *Faust*.[1]

And the outcome of this antipathetic nature, when the name of Dante was brought into prominence by the writers of the so-called "Romantic" school, of whom I shall have next to speak, was seen in the tone of bitterness and scorn with which Goethe always speaks of the author of the *Commedia*. It is from first to last an echo of the words with which the Epicureans of all ages have spoken of the followers after righteousness :—

> "He professeth to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth himself the child of the Lord. He was made to reprove our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion."—*Wisd. Sol*, ii. 13–15.

When at Rome in May 1787, he summed up his judgment of the *Commedia* in the words that the "*Inferno* was abominable, the *Purgatorio* doubtful, the *Paradiso* tiresome" (Scart., *Germ.*, i. p. 20). In his *Conversations with Eckermann*, he shows his scholar a bust of Dante and says that "he looks as if he came out of Hell" (i. 118). "To you," he added, "the study of this poet is absolutely forbidden by your father-confessor." His "rhyme system," he says elsewhere, "made him unintelligible: he was not a *talent*, but a *nature*" (i. 120). He says of him in words which, though true, seem to be disparaging in their intent, that "though he appears great to us, he has the culture of centuries behind him" (ii. 27).

To pass from the titanic power, not without its demonic element, of the poet of Weimar to the men of letters who were grouped as the Romantic school,

[1] The closing scene of the *Faust* seems almost a deliberate travesty of the *Paradiso*, just as the opening scene is of the Prologue to the Book of Job, Gretchen taking the place of Beatrice.

is to descend to a lower level. To them, however, it was, much more than to him, that Germany was indebted for the first introduction of the name and fame of Dante. A. W. Von Schlegel, who won an early fame by his translation of Shakespeare (1797–1810), appeared also at a still earlier date (1795) as a translator of selected portions of each cantique of the *Commedia*, and wrote an essay on Dante in Bürger's *Academie der Schöner Redekunste.* These I have not seen, but his *Lectures on Dramatic Literature* delivered at Vienna in 1808, though the subject did not bring the works of Dante directly within his horizon, show that he was familiar with the *Commedia* and looked on it with a loving and reverent appreciation, of which I select a few examples. He has been speaking of the imitation of the Greek and Latin classics which characterised the earlier *Renaissance* :—

"With the great poets and artists it was otherwise. However strong their enthusiasm for the ancients, and however determined their purpose of entering into competition with them, they were compelled by their independence and originality of mind to strike out a path of their own, and to impress upon their productions the stamp of their own genius. Such was the case with Dante among the Italians, the father of modern poetry. Acknowledging Virgil for his master, he has produced a work which, of all others, most differs from the *Æneid*, and, in our opinion, far excels its pretended model in power, truth, compass, and profundity" (p. 20, ed. Bohn).

In another passage (p. 80) he notes that Æschylus, "in the singular strangeness of his images and language, resembles Dante and Shakespeare." He couples Dante and Homer as instances of "high cultivation and practice in art," even in the poets, who are usually looked on as "children of nature, devoid of art or school discipline" (p. 359). He finds in Dante, as in Shakespeare, "a profound view of the

inward life of nature and her mysterious being" (p. 396).[1]

In Frederick Von Schlegel, in whom the reverence for the past and the yearning after something wider and deeper than the popular Lutheranism of Germany led to his conversion to the Church of Rome, we have less of the mere man of letters, and more of the profound thinker than in his brother. In his *Philosophy of History* he comes across the union of the "tendency towards the absolute," which characterised "the art and poetry as well as the science of the Middle Age," with the fantastic spirit which in various forms mingled with it and them :—

"The singular manner, indeed, in which the Italian poet Dante has, in his mighty poem of visions, wherein he displays the most masterly and classical condensation of language and the profoundest poetical art, contrived to sustain, in his progress through the three regions of the invisible world, that fantastic spirit, next, the stern maxim of the Ghibelline state policy and a congenial worship of Roman antiquity, and has managed to unite all these qualities with the subtle distinctions of the scholastic philosophy. This singular manner, indeed, has never been an object of general imitation, nor has it opened a path to the subsequent labours of art. But this work will ever remain an extraordinary, wonderful, and characteristic monument, wherein the peculiar spirit of this first scholastico-romantic epoch of European art and science is displayed in a most remarkable manner."

The *Cosmos* of Alexander Von Humboldt presents a testimony of a different kind, from one who was a man of science rather than a man of letters. His plan led him to dwell on the effect of the visible universe in drawing out the powers and emotions of man's mind, and he notes the supreme excellence

[1] In 1803 A. W. Schlegel translated several of the Minor Poems, and in a paper in the German *Athenäum* (circ. 1798–1800) groups Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe as "the *trifolium* of modern poetry," the first of the three being recognised as the "prophet of Catholicism."

which, in this respect, is manifested in Dante as an observer:—

"When the glory of the Aramaic Greek and Roman dominion—or, I might almost say, when the ancient world had passed away, we find in the great and inspired founder of a new era, Dante Alighieri, occasional manifestations of the deepest sensibility to the charms of the terrestrial life of Nature, whenever he abstracts himself from the passionate and subjective control of that despondent mysticism which constituted the general circle of his ideas."

He proceeds to notice the "inimitable grace" of the pictures of the dawn and the "*il tremolar della marina*" (*Purg.* i. 115–117), of the storm after the battle of Campaldino (*Purg.* v. 109–127), of the pine-wood of Ravenna and the songs of birds (*Purg.* xxviii. 1–24), of the river of light (*Par.* xxx. 61–69). His suggestion on this last description is not, I think, found elsewhere:—

"It would almost seem as if this picture had its origin in the poet's recollection of that peculiar and rare phosphorescent condition of the ocean when luminous points appear to rise from the breaking waves, and, spreading themselves over the surface of the waters, convert the liquid plain into a moving sea of sparkling stars" (ii. p. 418)

In the year 1824, Scartazzini, as I have said above, recognises a new starting-point. The period of neglect or supercilious criticism comes to an end, and one of reverence, admiration, and exhaustive study begins. His account of the labours of German scholars during the sixty years that have followed fills the remainder of his volume. Translations of the *Commedia* by Kopisch, Kannegiesser, Witte, Philalethes (the *nom de plume* of John, King of Saxony), Josefa Von Hoffinger, of the Minor Poems by Witte and Krafft, endless volumes and articles on all points connected with Dante's life and character, the publications of the

Deutsche Dante-Gesellschaft from 1867 to 1877, present a body of literature which has scarcely a parallel in history. It is no exaggeration to say that the Germans have taught Italians to understand and appreciate their own poet, just as they have at least helped to teach Englishmen to understand Shakespeare. Out of the vast range of matter thus presented I must content myself with selecting a few of the more salient points which touch upon the subject of this *Study*.

(1) THE LABOURS OF KARL WITTE.—I doubt whether the history of men of letters presents a more complete instance of devotion to a single work than that of the Dantophilist whom I have just named. For more than sixty years he consecrated his life to the studies, the results of which, after appearing in countless journals and Transactions, have been collected by the author in his *Dante Forschungen*. Nothing has been too great or too small for him. He has collated the text of MSS., hunted out lost sonnets in the libraries of Italian cities, translated both the *Commedia* and the Minor Poems, has reviewed well-nigh every work on Dante that appeared for forty years, and has thrown himself with a profound insight and sympathy into the poet's mind and character. As the result of this labour of love, he has left, as his chief contribution to Dante literature, an essay on what he calls "Dante Misunderstood" (*Ueber das Missverstandniss Dantes*). I have been largely indebted to that essay, and to other papers in which the same theory of the trilogy of Dante's life has been developed, in my own Life of the poet and in my study on the *Genesis and Growth of the Commedia*, but it may be well to give its substance in a slightly abridged form in the writer's own words:—

"Already in the tender years of innocence Dante had opened his heart to love; but a love so pure and chaste and holy, that it would be hard to say whether it were roused by the child Beatrice, or whether the boy had given to her, as the visible symbol of his Creator, the fervent devotion with which he looked on his Father in Heaven. The *Vita Nuova* is the product of the filial love thus originated

"But when the poet reached the age of manhood, and Beatrice was taken from him, he mourned long time for her, as men mourn for a lost innocence. Then at last, allured by new charms, he thinks that he has refound his first love in the glances of the *donna gentile*. In these new promises of consolation, however, his first affection is felt to be passing from his thoughts and he is entirely occupied with the new consoler, which is Philosophy. Of this new love mingled with bitter grief we have the record in the *Amoroso Convito*, a love unquiet and full of pain, because for the peace of filial resignation there had come in desires more impetuous. These the graces of his new mistress could not satisfy

"Thus is Alighieri led to speculate on all things that present themselves to his mind—on justice, valour, magnanimity, to defend and explain his views on the ordinances of civil polity, on the chief events of his time, to employ his life to realise in act what had come before his mind as true ideality. It is precisely at this time that he enters on public life, and probably that he corrects and formulates his thoughts on language and poetry.

"But then the rage of parties threatens to draw him into the whirlpool of worldly cares and unbridled passions, and Philosophy to reveal to him that other aspect of her face which she turns away far from this lower world. And therefore, turning his back on earthly allurements, and on the scene of furious conflicts, he sets himself to climb the steepest paths of speculation, if so he might come to gaze upon the Sun of eternal truth, to know the very essence of the Deity. This he essays to do by natural reason, but soon he is conscious of his feebleness; he sees that he has taken a wrong path, that only Revelation could guide him to a happy issue. Having already in some measure strayed from the religion of Christ, the three virtues that are characteristic of it are lacking to him, and lower passions drag him forcibly into the darkness of our stormy life. He is fast bound by present things and their delights, he does not hope in the coming kingdom of God; he becomes the prey of an ill-regulated self-love. Instead of believing and submitting himself to Divine

Revelation, his philosophic pride dazzles him, and he thinks that reason is sufficient to penetrate to the lowest abysses of the Infinite. Lastly, instead of love, there is hatred, which inflames him against his erring brothers, and makes him the slave of the spirit of faction, envy, and intolerance.

"And then, lo! the grace of God begins to rekindle in his breast the light of religion, and he repents of his abandonment to philosophic pride, his first faith and his first love for his Beatrice revive in him more glowing than ever, and on the very day on which the Divine Redeemer had wrought salvation for mankind, the poet is restored to freedom in his inmost being, save that his sin still weighs upon his conscience; nor can he, according to the Church's teaching, enter into the glory of Heaven except by feeling, in a broken and contrite heart, a profound grief for the impiety committed by him in departing from God, by cleansing himself, by due expiation, from the stains which had defiled the native divine purity of his soul—*contritio, satisfactio.*"

It will be remembered that in all this Witte writes as a Lutheran, and has therefore no polemic motive, such as may, consciously or unconsciously, have influenced men like Ozanam, Hettinger, or Manning, leading him to vindicate Dante's Catholicity. Substantially we have seen he comes to the same conclusion as they do, but it is the distinguishing merit of his theory, considered as a working hypothesis, that it takes in all, or well-nigh all, the phænomena which the problem presents, instead of resting, as the writers I have named, and those of the opposite school, like Rossetti and Aroux, have done, in a partial and one-sided induction. Its completeness has so far won, at least, the general assent of most of the great Dante experts both in Germany and other parts of Europe, notably of Scartazzini, the only writer whose lifelong devotion and all-devouring exhaustiveness place him on the same line as Witte.

(2) The Translation of Philalethes.—The phænomenon of a version of such a poem as the *Commedia* by a sovereign ruler is, as far as I know,

unique in literature. Here also there was the life-long devotion without which success in such a work—such success as John, King of Saxony, has attained—is altogether impossible. Born in 1801, he succeeded his father, Maximilian, in 1854, and died in 1872. The translation was at first printed privately by instalments in 1828–40, and has since been republished (1865) in a collected form.

I quote from the preface to the second edition a few words that express the feeling of the translator for his author :—

"Dante," he writes, "has for a long time been one of the writers whom I have most loved, and the very difficulties which he presented were for me a new attraction to consecrate myself to him with an ever growing and more living affection. The special impress of a man in the highest degree standing apart from every other, in a time entirely different from every other, . . . a language which so far presented a hindrance to the poet's genius, inasmuch as he had to be the first to create it, its high moral elevation and its infinite elaboration in execution, were always to me an irresistible attraction. The *Divina Commedia* has always presented to me the aspect of a Gothic cathedral, where the exaggerations of ornament may sometimes offend our more refined taste, while the sublime and austere impression of the whole, and the exquisite finish and variety of details, fill our mind with wonder. The one no less than the other are living products of a period fertile in movement, of that Middle Age which we have now begun once more to hold in honour."

(3) WEGELE'S (F. X.) LEBEN DANTE.—As the version of Philalethes among translations, so is the work bearing this title among the biographies of Dante. In thoroughness, insight, freedom from triviality or unprofitable discussion of what has been said by others, it presents itself as a model of all that the life of a great poet ought to be.

I select a few samples of the thoughts which seem to me most pregnant with a suggestive light :—

"We recognise in this union" (of the real and the ideal in Dante's treatment of Beatrice) "one of the master-strokes of the *Divine Comedy*. We must not forget that it is no saint of the Church, no one with an authority that would prevail with an outsider, but only his own beloved one that the poet sought to glorify, and that in the region where he had actually experienced her power. The natural and artistic elements of this combination have, perhaps, best been grasped by Raphael, who, if I am not altogether mistaken, has beyond doubt had Dante's Beatrice in his thoughts in his well-known personification of Theology.

* * * * *

"The political and moral condition in which Dante would have maintained his country, or to which rather he would have brought her back, is to be recognised most clearly in the indications which are found in the several passages of the poem on the destinies and the state of Florence. He rejects altogether the democratic principle, and seeks its golden age in the first half of the twelfth century, when the power of the nobles was yet unbroken, and the *popolo* lived in happy obscurity, and a simple and pure morality ruled them. This view of Dante must seem to us all the more important because it brings before us, in a single instance, his judgment upon the whole civic development of Upper Italy. He clung to Florence with a love which nothing could destroy, here he had looked in closest proximity on the workings of the democratic spirit, had experienced them in his own person, and had become their victim So we come at the outset on the decided aristocratic feudal character of the poet, which we have already ascribed to him" (p. 565).

"For the endeavour after the unity of his people Dante spoke the first and the decisive word, which can never now be stifled It was the well-deserved expiation of the wrong done to the living patriot when the nation, nearing the completion of its unity, proclaimed to the listening world, with the wide-echoing trumpet-note of a national festival, the six-hundredth anniversary of the birthday of her greatest son" (p. 575).

Elsewhere he claims for Dante a foremost place among the restorers of Latin literature:—

"It is not too much to say that Dante was the first to give a true living reality to the name of Virgil. He has good

ground for calling him his master, and for speaking of the long study and the great love which he has given to his poems. In like, though less intimate, relations he stands to Lucan and Statius, to Cicero and Horace, and especially to Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses*, together with the *Æneid*, furnish him with the richest supply of materials. . . We do not, however, say that he shared unreservedly the one-sided passionate surrender to classical studies which characterised the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of Italian history. Quite the reverse of this. He seems to have known his nation so well that he had a forecast of that one-sidedness, and therefore strove with all the energy of which his nature was capable to establish a healthy equilibrium through the cultivation of a national literature, especially that of prose applied to the treatment of scientific subjects. His warning voice, however, was as that of one crying in the wilderness.

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"The man from whom modern history takes its start, Machiavelli, learnt from none of his predecessors so much as from Dante. This is clear to any one familiar with his writings, and one scarcely needs to know that he, with the ancient classics, was his favourite author. The two men have, in spite of all differences in their natures, essential points of contact in their views and aims. Machiavelli, like Dante, rejects the republican principle, and presses forward to the political unity of Italy. If Dante strives to attain that end through the legitimate Roman *imperium*, it was that he lived in the thirteenth century of the Middle Ages, a through and through ideal nature Machiavelli sighs, as a far-sighted seer of the newer age, after a new prince, a revolutionary despot, who with fire and sword shall bring his people to their senses, and smiles at the cosmopolitanism of his forerunner" (p. 604).

"When Dante himself brands with infamy the degeneracy of his nation, we might hold his judgment as unjust from the very fact that it had given birth to a character so strong as his own. But of a truth he was for a long time the last of that type. How far below him stands Petrarch! Petrarch was a man of letters, his life the brilliant life of a man of letters, in which self-consciousness and self-seeking played a great part. Dante was a statesman and a scholar; his poetry is without any worldly aims, solely and entirely the fruit of his inner impulse and his spiritual development. Petrarch was a man of the understanding, cold-blooded in his very

enthusiasm, and knew how to make compromises with everybody Dante held fast to his convictions and would make no concession to circumstances. So it was that the one led a comfortable and brilliant life, and, at the end of his days, left the world probably with regret; the other died poor and in exile, but, without doubt, assured and restful in himself.

* * * * *

"It is not uncommon for the spirit of a dying age to rouse itself yet once more to maintain its falling supremacy In this sense it was that Dante took the field. He could not stay the fall of the decaying Middle Age, but he has built for it a colossal monument, the like of which is found nowhere else on the border-land which commands the last view of a world-period coming to its close. In the *Divina Commedia* he has chanted the swan-song of the Middle Ages" (p. 612).

(4) JOSEFA VON HOFFINGER.—I note this name chiefly on account of the verses which I have translated, and which seem to me to give an estimate new in character, and from the standpoint of a clear-sighted and sympathising woman, of Dante's relations with his wife. The history of the writer of these lines is, however, remarkable enough to be worth telling.[1]

Born in 1820 at Vienna, the daughter of a Government official (*Regierungsrath*), she developed in early life powers of an unusual order. In 1848 she was appointed as the second mistress of the highest institution for female education in that city. Failing health compelled her to retire in 1858. In 1866 she took an active part in nursing the sick and wounded during the great war between Austria and Prussia. The work overtasked her strength, and she died in the September of that year, after some months of suffering, heroically borne. From 1840 she had been a student of the *Commedia*, and the effect of that study, with her as with thousands of others, had been to deepen and

[1] I take my narrative from an obituary notice by V. A. Huber, whose *History of English Universities* is well known to most students, in the *D. Gesell.* ii. pp. 385-394.

ennoble her inner life. She studied theology under the guidance of men like Döllinger and Veith. Devotion to the poet took with her, as with so many, the form of a wish to reproduce him in her own language. She hesitated between her strong desire and the consciousness of her own want of power. At last, in October 1863, she began and completed her whole work—so rapid a performance of so great a task is, I think, without a parallel—in sixteen months. The poem of which I have spoken seems to me well worthy of being more widely known. It has the interest of being the one woman's view of Dante's home-life (Miss Maria Rossetti's *Shadow of Dante* excepted) that has come within the range of my reading, and as showing what a faithful and loving nature pictured to itself as a true representation of that life.

DANTE'S WIFE

FROM A WOMAN'S POINT OF VIEW

(*From the German of Josefa Von Hoffinger*)

On every tongue is Beatrice's name·
  Of thee, much sorrowing one, no song doth tell;
The pang of parting like a keen dart came,
  And pierced thee with a wound invisible.
Art brings her incense only to the fair,
Virtue must wait her crown in Heaven to wear.

E'en he, for whom thou didst thy burden bear,
  By not one word his love for thee revealed.
His wailings o'er his country all might hear;
  For thee those lips so eloquent were sealed;
And so on him and thee cold hearts cast blame,
Not knowing silent grief brings worthiest fame.

The deepest wound still shrinks from slightest touch,
  It feeds upon itself in secret pain,
The breath of words but makes it more from much;
  A beggar dumb the sufferer must remain·
The keenest pang, which language fails to reach,
Finds, in half-broken sobs, its only speech.

They know not, when each nerve with anguish thrills,
  How palsied sinks the artist's expert hand,
And, where sharp sorrow all the spirit fills,
  The poet's lips no utterance may command:
Life's bitterest moments find no voice in song;
Groans only tell of hearts opprest with wrong

"From all thou lovest best thou soon must part,"[1]
  So ran the broken speech of his lament,
Far off that greeting came from grief-worn heart,
  To the true wife, his faithful helpmate, sent;
A farewell glance from eyes whence flowed no tears,
Dry with vain longings through the lonely years.

"The pilgrim's grief, when sound the evening bells,
  The day that he has bid dear friends Good-bye;"[2]
Thus through the soul thrill memory's magic spells
  The sorrow-stifled germ of melody;
A cry of anguish, melting into sighs,
Tells of the throbbing heart's dull miseries.

Yes, thou brave woman, mother of his sons,
  'Twas thine to know the weight of daily care,
'Twas thine to understand those piteous tones,
  Thine much to suffer, all in silence bear;
How great thy grief, thy woes how manifold,
God only knows—of them no song hath told.

(5) HETTINGER, FRANZ. *Dante's Divina Commedia: its Scope and Value.* Edited by H. S. Bowden, 1886.—Short of a formal Vatican decree of canonisation, the volume which bears this title comes as near as may be, in itself and in its history, to an official recognition of Dante's catholicity and soundness in the faith. The *Advocatus Diaboli* has been heard in the person of Aroux, and Dr. Hettinger, Professor of Theology in the University of Wurzburg, appears as counsel for the defence. It is translated into English by Father H. S. Bowden of the Oratory. It is commended by a circular letter from the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in words of glowing eloquence which I have already quoted.

[1] *Par.* xvii. 55. [2] *Purg.* viii. 1-6.

As if to crown all these with the highest authority, we have, if not a Papal utterance *ex cathedrâ*, at least a formal public act on the part of the successor of St. Peter. "In 1857 Pius IX. himself placed a wreath on the tomb of Dante at Ravenna" (p. 346). Coupling these facts with the strong impulse given to the study of Aquinas by the present Pontiff with his known personal devotion to the *Commedia*, with the early anticipation of a *Sancte Dantes, Ora pro nobis* in the elegy of De' Fantinelli (p. 413), with the language of Rosmini and Silvio Pellico, it seems to need only a slight extension of the doctrine of development for the Latin Church to take yet one step farther and formally to place the name of Dante on her list of saints. One feels almost tempted to compose a Latin collect for May 15, or a Commemoration, like that in honour of Bishop Ken, with which Cardinal Newman sought in his earlier years to enrich the Anglican Prayer-Book. Anyhow, it would seem a better experiment in hagiology than the canonisation of Mary Queen of Scots.

Dr. Hettinger's volume is an elaborate study of the *Commedia* from the standpoint of the *Summa Theologica*, illustrated by copious extracts from both. So far it follows in the steps of Ozanam. It is, perhaps, a more elaborate work than *Dante et la Philosophie Catholique*; it lacks, I think, something of the devout glow with which that volume is inspired.

Dr. Hettinger's work, exhaustive as it is, does not present many passages for quotation. I select a few by way of sample of his general estimate of Dante's character and genius:—

"Two works only, in ancient and modern times, can claim comparison with the *Divina Commedia*—Homer's *Iliad* and Goethe's *Faust*. The nearest in matter and fofm, though

still its inferior, is *Faust*. It is the only German poem which unites, under the figure of Faust, man's present efforts and his final end. It is a comedy, but, as Schelling remarks, far more in the sense of Aristophanes, and divine in another and more poetic acceptation of the word But granted that Goethe in genius and culture was Dante's equal, both as a poet and in other respects, yet he lacked the creative power necessary to develop his idea. His ideal world is purely allegorical, and his images of it, though artistically drawn, are arbitrary and well-nigh unintelligible. Most poets clothe their ideas in allegorical forms, whose unreality is apparent throughout, and the illusion entirely fails Dante's figures, on the contrary, have a real existence, independent of their allegorical significance, and they themselves, more than their antitypes, speak to our imagination. With him we tread upon sure ground, and are surrounded by realities. Goethe's world, displayed in *Faust*, may be richer in ideas, more varied in form, than that of Dante, but the problem of the Universe which he proposes to unriddle is never solved Wreck and dissolution of body and soul alike are, with Faust, the only end of this life. Dante, on the other hand, sees one eternal purpose traced and developed in all things, and man, through the Redeemer, winning his way to God. Nor can the fragmentary form of *Faust* compare with the organised completeness of Dante's poem.

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"Thus in Dante's hands the real Beatrice and her spirit idealised form one character. From their first meeting in childhood to that when she smiles upon him for the last time from the bosom of God, she is manifested in a gradual process of transfiguration and glorification. It is her form which gives dramatic interest and movement to the whole process of absolution, purification, illumination, and beatification. In her theology and poetry, speculation and phantasy, are wonderfully united."

(7) J. A. SCARTAZZINI.—The name of this writer might seem to claim a place under the head of Italian rather than German Dante literature. He is, however, emphatically a man *utriusque linguæ peritus*. On the one hand we have his Italian Commentary on the *Commedia*, beyond all question the most elaborate and exhaustive in any language, and the *Dante in*

Germania, which has so largely contributed to the completeness of the present section of this essay. On the other, he has published his *Life of Dante* in German, was the editor of the last volume of the *Jahrbucher* of the German Dante Society, and contributed some of his most valuable papers to its third and fourth volumes.

I am, I need scarcely say, very largely indebted to him both as a commentator and a biographer. In each of these regions he brings together the results of an omnivorous range of reading. Nothing that has been written about Dante in German or Italian seems to have escaped him. He discusses conflicting theories of the man and of his works, of single passages or isolated phrases, and for the most part comes to a true and sensible conclusion. On the other hand, it must I think, be admitted that he excels rather in thus analysing and balancing what has been said by others than in embodying his own thoughts in forcible and pregnant words, and I do not find in him so many passages that present themselves for quotation as I do in Wegele. I select one or two of the most suggestive from the *Life of Dante*.—

"The *Vita Nuova* belongs to the list of those writings, in the highest degree interesting and attractive, which reveal, with childlike simplicity, the heart of the writer, his innermost thought and feeling. It is an autobiography *sui generis.* As a whole, literature, in the widest sense, possesses only one book which may be compared with Dante's *primitiæ* as an author the *Confessions of Augustine.* In the one, as in the other, there is the same intensity of feeling, the same prominence of subjective individuality, the same depth of consciousness" (pp. 302–303).

"Dante's poem has experienced nearly the same fate as the writings of the authors of the Bible. Every age which occupies itself with them, seeks to find in it its own views, every interpreter his own thoughts. Especially in the poet's

own country, which, as lay in the nature of the case, occupied itself more thoroughly and diligently with the father of its culture and its literature, every tendency and every party has striven with all imaginable energy to make the great poet one of themselves. To the ultramontanes Dante must be an ultramontane; to the demagogues, a demagogue; to the lovers of innovation, an innovator, to the free-thinkers, a free-thinker, to political parties, a partisan, to believers, a believer, to infidels, an infidel. With such prepossessions men have approached the *Divina Commedia*, and what wonder then that it has been liable to all possible interpretations, that men's views as to its fundamental ideas have been wide as the poles asunder?" (p. 474.)

VII

AMERICA

Mr. Longfellow's translation of the *Commedia* is the most conspicuous proof that our Transatlantic brethren are not behind others in their reverence for the great Florentine. It is far, however, from standing alone, and it does not occupy the foremost position in order of time. So far as I know, the earliest translation of the *Vita Nuova* into English, *The Early Life of Dante Alighieri*, was by an American, Mr. J. Garrow, published at Florence in 1846. Another version was printed at Boston by Mr. C. E. Norton, Sir Theodore Martin and Mr. D. G. Rossetti having in the meantime published their versions in 1862 and 1866 respectively. To Mr. Norton we also owe a fairly full essay on the portraits of Dante. An examination of Mr. Longfellow's version does not fall within the scope of the present study, and neither in his notes nor in his diary and correspondence is there anything of the nature of an estimate which presents itself for quotation. One wishes sometimes, as one

goes through the rich collection of materials of this nature which he has gathered from others, and of which I have largely availed myself, that he had told us what he himself thought of the genius and character of the man to whom he devoted so many years of loving labour. As some compensation for the absence of that which is thus lacking, he has given us in the sonnets prefixed to the three parts of the *Commedia* a worthy tribute from the foremost poet of the New World to the greatest poet-prophet—the noblest *vates sacer*—of the Old, and these I lay before the reader.

I. HELL

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A labourer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his *paternoster* o'er.
Far off the noises of the world retreat,
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

II. PURGATORY

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom
Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!
And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine.
The air is filled with some unknown perfume;
The congregation of the dead make room
For thee to pass, the votive tapers shine;
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's groves of pine,
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb.
From the confessionals I hear arise
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,
And lamentations from the crypts below;

And then a voice celestial, that begins
With the pathetic words "Although your sins
As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."

III. PARADISE

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze
With forms of Saints, and holy men who died,
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays
Christ's triumph, and the angelic roundelays,
With splendour upon splendour multiplied;
And Beatrice again at Dante's side
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love,
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;
And the melodious bells among the spires
O'er all the housetops and through heaven above
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!

The defect which I have noted in Longfellow is, however, more than balanced by the *Essay on Dante* which Mr. J. R. Lowell[1] has published in vol i. of *Among my Books*. Of that essay, take it all in all, it seems no exaggeration to say that it is simply the most complete presentation of what Dante wrote, of what the man himself was, that exists in any literature. More subtly penetrating, more reverential in its attitude and tone, more loving and complete in its knowledge of the whole poem, from the first line of the *Inferno* to the last of the *Paradiso*, than Dean Church's essay it could scarcely be, and it can never supersede it. The later writer has, however, the advantage of reaping where the earlier had sown, and he gathers into his barn the rich harvest of those labourers who were before him in the field. There is,

[1] Mr. Lowell and Mr. Norton, it may be mentioned, were members of the Dante Club which formed a kind of consultative committee during the progress of Mr. Longfellow's translation. It has since expanded into a Dante Society at Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., and publishes its annual transactions with as yet unabated vitality.

accordingly, a wider range of knowledge and illustration, a more critical survey of what has been done for Dante by others, a fuller discussion of the vexed questions that gather round the poet's life and character. I refer the reader to that essay as completing whatever I may have left incomplete, and telling the tale which I have told—(I am thankful that for the most part I find myself in agreement with him)—with a force and vividness to which I am conscious that I can lay no claim. I gather, as a worthy ending of this present study, some half-dozen of its more striking passages:—

"Looked at outwardly, the life of Dante seems to have been an utter and disastrous failure. What its inward satisfactions must have been, we, with the *Paradiso* open before us, can form some faint conception To him, longing, with an intensity which only the word *Dantesque* will express, to realise an ideal upon earth, and continually baffled and misunderstood, the far greater part of his mature life must have been labour and sorrow. We can see how essential all that sad experience was to him, we understand why all the fairy stories hide the luck in the ugly black basket, but to him, then and there, how seemed it?

'Thou shalt relinquish everything of thee
Beloved most dearly, this that arrow is
Shot from the bow of exile first of all,
And thou shalt prove how salt a savour hath
The bread of others, and how hard a path
To climb and to descend the stranger's stairs'

"*Come sa di sale!* Who never wet his bread with tears, says Goethe, knows ye not, ye heavenly powers!" (p. 19).

* * * * *

"The *Vita Nuova* traces with exquisite unconsciousness the gradual but certain steps by which memory and imagination transubstantiated the woman of flesh and blood into a holy ideal, combining in one radiant symbol of sorrow and hope that faith which is the instinctive refuge of unavailing regret, that grace of God which higher natures learn to find in

the trial which passeth all understanding, and that perfect womanhood, the dream of youth and the memory of maturity which beckons towards the for-ever unattainable. As a contribution towards the physiology of genius, no other book is to be compared with the *Vita Nuova.* It is more important to the understanding of Dante as a poet than any other of his works. It shows him (and that in the midst of affairs demanding practical ability and presence of mind) capable of a depth of contemplative abstraction equalling that of a Soofi who has passed the fourth step of initiation. It enables us, in some sense, to see how, from being the slave of his imaginative faculty, he rose by self-culture and force of will to that mastery of it which is art" (p 26).

* * * * *

"Dante is assumed by many to have been a Platonist, but this is not true in the strict sense of the word. Like all men of great imagination, he was an idealist, and so far a Platonist as Shakespeare might be proved to have been from his sonnets. But Dante's direct acquaintance with Plato may be reckoned at zero, and we consider it as having strongly influenced his artistic development for the better, that, transcendentalist as he was by nature, so much so as to be in danger of lapsing into an Oriental mysticism, his habits of thought should have been made precise and his genius disciplined by a mind so severely logical as that of Aristotle" (p 33).

* * * * *

"The whole nature of Dante was one of intense belief. There is proof upon proof that he believed himself invested with a divine mission. Like the Hebrew prophets, with whose writings his whole soul was imbued, it was back to the old worship and the God of the fathers that he called the people" (p. 36).

* * * * *

"As a merely literary figure, the position of Dante is remarkable. Not only as respects thoughts, but as respects æsthetics also, his great poem stands as a monument between the ancient and modern. He not only marks, but is in himself, the transition. *Arma virumque cano*, that is the motto of classic song; the things of this world and great men. Dante says, *subjectum est homo*, not *vir*; my theme is *man*, not *a* man. The scene of the old epic and drama was in this world, and

its catastrophe here. Dante lays his scene in the human soul and his fifth act in the other world. He makes himself the protagonist of his own drama. In the *Commedia* for the first time Christianity wholly revolutionises Art, and becomes its seminal principle But æsthetically also, as well as morally, Dante stands between the old and the new, and reconciles them. The theme of his poem is purely subjective, modern, what is called romantic, but its treatment is objective (almost to realism, here and there) and it is limited by a form of classical severity. In the same way he sums up in himself the two schools of modern poetry which had preceded him, and while essentially lyrical in his subject, is epical in his treatment of it So also he combines the deeper and more abstract religious sentiment of the Teutonic race with the scientific and absolute systematism of the Romanic In one respect Dante stands alone While we can in some sort account for such representative men as Voltaire and Goethe (nay, even Shakespeare), by the intellectual and moral fermentation of their time, Dante seems morally isolated, and to have drawn his inspiration wholly from his own internal resources" (p. 37)

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"Milton's angels are not to be compared with Dante's, at once real and supernatural; and the Deity of Milton is a Calvinistic Zeus, while nothing in all poetry approaches the imaginative grandeur of Dante's vision of God at the conclusion of the *Paradise* In all literary history there is no such figure as Dante, no such homogeneousness of life and work, such loyalty to ideas, such sublime irrecognition of the unessential, and there is no moral more touching than that the contemporary recognition of such a nature should be summed up in the sentence of Florence: *Igne comburatur sic quod moriatur*" (p. 38).

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"As the Gothic cathedral, then, is the type of the Christian idea, so is it also of Dante's poem. And as that, in its artistic unity, is but the completed thought of a single architect, which yet could never have been realised except out of the faith and by the contributions of an entire people, whose beliefs and superstition, whose imagination and fancy, find expression in its statues and its carvings, its calm saints and martyrs, now at rest for ever in the seclusion of their canopied niches, and

its wanton grotesques thrusting themselves forth from every pinnacle and gargoyle, so in Dante's poem, while it is as personal and peculiar as if it were his private journal and autobiography, we can yet read the diary and autobiography of the thirteenth century and of the Italian people Complete and harmonious in design as his work is, it is yet no Pagan temple enshrining a type of the human made divine by triumph of corporeal beauty, it is not a private chapel housing a single saint and dedicate to one chosen bloom of Christian piety or devotion; it is truly a cathedral, over whose high altar hangs the emblem of suffering, of the Divine made human to teach the beauty of adversity, the eternal presence of the spiritual, not overhanging and threatening, but informing and sustaining, the material. In this cathedral of Dante's there are side-chapels, as is fit, with altars to all Christian virtues and perfections, but the great impression of its leading thought is that of aspiration for ever and ever. In the three divisions of the poem we may trace something more than a fancied analogy with a Christian basilica. There is first the ethnic fore-court, then the purgatorial middle-space, and last, the holy of holies, dedicated to the eternal presence of the mediatorial God" (p. 101).

With this extract, the most perfect development, as it seems to me, of an idea which had become, in its elementary form, almost the commonplace of commentators, I close this *catena* of estimates. I am conscious of its incompleteness. Within the regions which I have attempted to survey there are in each some scores of men and women whose thoughts have been stirred by Dante, who have formed their own estimate of him, and found utterance for it in prose or verse. Beyond those regions, in every country into which the *Commedia* has been translated, Dutch, Spanish, Swedish, Russian, Hungarian, he has doubtless made his impressions, been the object of like judgments. Whether they would add new elements to the induction, or illustrate only the uniformity of the laws of human nature operating on the same object through the manifold diversities of character, I

cannot say. The impression left by the induction, such as it is, is, I suppose, that the last word has not yet been spoken, that the subject is, in fact, inexhaustible. In part, of course, this is true of every man's life, of the mystery of every man's character. As some one has said, *Satis alter alteri magnum theatrum sumus.* There is, in the strictest sense of the word, a drama, tragic or comic, or with both elements intermingled in ever varying proportions, in every one of us, beneath the conventionalities and uniformities of our everyday existence. But in proportion as any man rises above his fellows in gifts of intellect or character, in proportion as his spirit is solitary and king-like, and "his soul is as a star and dwells apart," the mystery and the enigma of his life become more unfathomable. Sophocles, Shakespeare, Milton, Cromwell, Goethe, among the great heroes of the past; Byron, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, John Henry Newman, and Frederick Maurice, in times nearer to our own—of these we feel that for generations to come men will write of them, as they have written of Dante, each from his own standpoint; each trying to gauge the unfathomable with his own plumb-line, with varying measures of success. One thing will, at least, be clear as the result of the induction: that in attempting such a measurement, men, consciously or unconsciously, reveal their own character, their sympathy with a nobility greater than their own, or their antipathy to that which stands in contrast with their own frivolity, or pedantry, or incapacity. It is true of Dante, as it has been true of every utterer of a prophetic word, of every wearer of the prophet's mantle, that he has been as "a sign that shall be spoken against," as one "set for the fall or rising again" of many in the wider Israel of mankind, that "the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

As we read the superficial criticism of the valets on the hero in his own age or in the ages that have followed, we are tempted to say, "*Procul, O procul este profani!* Draw back from the inner sanctuary, which is to be trodden only by those who put their shoes from off their feet, because they feel that the place on which they tread is holy ground." As we read the judgments of the nobler spirits, who could see more clearly because their eyes were cleansed from the films of egotism and baseness, we feel that the secret of their right judgment is found in the wider range of their sympathy. They have learnt to count nothing human alien from themselves, and they can therefore penetrate farther than their fellows into the heights and depths of humanity in its most exalted impersonations. Here also they feel that *omnia exeunt in mysterium*, but their knowledge of that mystery widens as the years pass on, and though they may not have solved the riddle of a single human character, not to speak of one so many-sided and myriad-minded as Dante's, they accept their partial glimpses as the pledge and earnest of a more perfect knowledge.

DANTE AS AN OBSERVER AND TRAVELLER

I

It is not my purpose in this chapter to enter upon the general subject of the life of the great Florentine, or to discuss the plan and purpose of his great poem. I shall say nothing of his passion for Beatrice, or of the part which he took in Italian politics, or the relation in which he stood to the Catholic theology of his time. Of these I have spoken with sufficient fulness elsewhere. What I aim at now is to answer the question whether we find in him the seeing eye and the hearing ear which are the conditions of all true excellence in poetry, whether he knew how to observe, and how to describe what he saw as he had actually seen it, not in the trite phrases of what has been falsely called poetic diction, conventional and traditional ornaments of style, but in words which said what he meant them to say, and did the work of bringing before the mental eyes of others the scene on which his own eyes had looked. That will help, if I mistake not, to enlarge the circle of those who know him, love him, and are grateful to him. They will learn that there is something in the great poet for readers who know nothing of the politics of Florence, or of the subtleties of the schoolmen, to whom the words *Neri* and *Bianchi*, Guelphs and Ghibellines, are but of little meaning. Here also it may be true of Dante,—I shall be thankful if I can help to make it true,—as of all great

masters of the poet's gifts, that the "common people will hear him gladly."

I shall take as my first example a picture that farmer and field-labourer will be able to enter into. It is an Italian scene in February, and the hoar frost lies on the ground almost like snow:—

"In that first season of the youthful year
When the sun's locks the chill Aquarius slakes,
And now the nights to half the day draw near,
When on the ground the hoar-frost semblance makes
Of the fair image of her sister white,
But soon her brush its colour true forsakes,
The peasant churl, whose store is emptied quite,
Rises and looks around, and sees the plains
All whitened, and for grief his hip doth smite,
Turns to his house, and up and down complains,
Like the poor wretch who knows not what to do,
Then back he turns and all his hope regains,
Seeing the world present an altered hue,
In little time, and takes his shepherd's crook,
And drives his lambs to roam through pastures new."
—*Hell*, xxiv. 1–15.

We see there the poet who can describe, not Nature only, but man as affected by the changes of Nature, the disappointment of the shepherd, when, at early dawn, he sees no chance of pasture for his yeanling lambs, for whom he has no store of fodder. He gives vent to his impatience after the manner of his class, and then the sun breaks through the wintry sky, and the fields are green once more, and his sheep can go forth upon the upland slopes.

There is a morning picture, such as Dante may have seen in the valleys of the Apennines. Here is a companion picture of an evening with entirely different surroundings. The scene is an Italian seaport; and the feeling described is that of the travellers who are leaving their home for some more or less distant country:—

"The hour was come which brings back yearning new
To those far out at sea, and melts their hearts,
The day that they have bid sweet friends adieu;
Whereat the pilgrim fresh with strong love starts,
If he, perchance, hears bells, far off, yet clear,
Which seem to mourn the day's life that departs."
—*Purg.* viii. 1–6.

Or take some other pictures of the glory of the dawn, apart from any special human feeling. The pilgrim emerges from the dark valley of the shadow of death, from the gloom of Hell to the clear air and sky on an Easter morning:—

"The orient sapphire's hue of sweetest tone
Which gathered in the aspect, calm and bright,
Of that pure air, as far as Heaven's first zone,
Now to mine eyes brought back the old delight,
Soon as I passed forth from the dead, dank air,
Which eyes and heart had veiled with saddest night.
The planet whence love floweth,[1] sweet and fair,
Clothed all the orient with a smiling grace."
—*Purg.* i. 13–20.

He climbs the lower slopes of the Mountain of Cleansing which rise from the ocean-waters,—so he thought of Purgatory,—and looks around him:—

"Near was the dawn its triumph bright to gain
O'er morning's mist that vanished, so that I
Knew from afar the trembling of the main."
—*Purg.* i 115–117.

The day advances further on its course:—

"So that Aurora's beauteous cheeks disclose,
From where I stand, the white and crimson sheen,
Now passing with the hours to orange glows."
—*Purg.* ii. 7–9.

Or we pass from this to an evening scene, when the glow-worms are seen, not as with us, lying on hedge-

[1] The planet Venus as the morning star.

row banks, but flitting to and fro, as they do in Italy, like fire-flies through the air. The pilgrim is in one of the circles of Hell, and he sees the souls of the damned thus gleaming in the darkness :—

"As when the peasant on the hill doth lie,—
What time his face from us is least concealed,
Who to the world gives light from out the sky,
And swarms of flies to gnats their places yield,—
And down the vale sees many a glow-worm's rays,
There where he plucks his grapes or ploughs his field."
—*Hell*, xxvi. 25–30.

Or take this more elaborate description of a forest scene in Italy which Dante brings before us, as what met his gaze when, after passing upwards through the seven terraces of the Mount of Cleansing, he found himself on the borders of that Earthly Paradise, of which, in the fourteenth century, men dreamt as still existing in the distant South, or East, or West, if only men could sail far enough over the wide unexplored ocean, or scale the mountains that guarded the remoter East :—

"Eager, within it, and around, each way
To search that heavenly forest dense and green,
That tempered to mine eyes the new-born day,
Waiting no more where I till then had been
Upon the bank I went on slowly, slow,
O'er ground which fragrance breathed through all the scene,
And a sweet breeze towards me then did blow
With calm unvarying course upon my face,
Not with more force than gentlest wind doth show
Thereat the leaves, set trembling all apace,
Bent themselves, one and all, towards the side
Where its first shade the Holy Hill doth trace,
Yet from the upright swerved they not aside
So far that any birds upon the spray
Ceased by their wonted task-work to abide,
But, with full heart of joy, the breeze of day
They welcomed now within their leafy bower,
Which to their songs made music deep to play,

Like that which through the pine-wood runs each hour,
From branch to branch upon Chiassi's shore,
When Æolus lets loose Sirocco's power.
Already had my slow steps led me o'er
Such space within the ancient wood, that I,
Where I had entered, now discerned no more,
And lo! to bar my progress, I descry
A river on the left, whose rippling stream
Bent down the grass that to its banks grew nigh
All waters here on earth men clearest deem
Would seem to have some turbid taint untrue,
Compared with that which nought to hide doth seem,
E'en though it flows on, brown and brown in hue,
Beneath the eternal shade where never sun
Nor moon the darkness with their rays break through."
—*Purg* xxviii 1–33.

All this, it will be admitted, forms a picture of surpassing beauty. But the landscape needed for its completeness, as well nigh all landscapes do, a human element, and it will be felt that the form which now appears on the scene is one well worthy of the pencil of a great artist. She is, I may note in passing, the Matilda of Dante's Purgatory, the early friend, too early lost, of his beloved Beatrice, of whom he thinks as the representative of the life of active cheerfulness, as Beatrice herself is of that of contemplative wisdom.[1] And this is how he paints her :—

"My feet then halted, but mine eyes passed on
Beyond that little stream, that I might gaze
On the fresh varied May-blooms one by one,
And then I saw—as one sees with amaze—
A sight so sudden in bewilderment
That every other thought the shock doth daze—
A lady all alone, who, as she went,
Sang evermore, and gathered flower on flower,
With whose bright hues her path was all besprent."
—*Purg* xxviii. 34–42.

I pass over the dialogue between the lady and the

[1] See Note on *Purg* xxviii. 40, *Ball.* 2.

pilgrim which follows, as not belonging to the word-painting on which I now seek to dwell, but one finishing touch comes to give a fuller pictorial, I might almost say, dramatic, completeness :—

"Then, as fair lady moving in the dance,
Turns with her soles just lifted from the ground,
And scarcely one foot forward doth advance,
She among red and golden flowers turned round
To me, and with no other look she went
Than downcast eyes of maid with meekness crowned.
And now she gave my prayers their full content,
So drawing near me, that her song's sweet tone
Came to me, and I gathered what it meant.
Soon as she came where o'er the bank had grown
Plants with the waves of that fair river wet,
By special boon her eyes were on me thrown."
—*Purg.* xxviii. 52–63.

Most readers will, I think, agree with me that a more perfect picture is hardly to be found in the whole range of poetry. It paints, of course, an ideal scene, a beauty of wood and water such as Dante's eyes had never looked on, a human loveliness which was beyond what he had known and loved on earth. But none the less is it true that the ideal scene is developed out of the recollections of the past. Here, as elsewhere, the Muses are the daughters of Memory, and they bring forth from the rich storehouse in which they have gathered the impressions they have received through sight or hearing, the "things new and old" which the occasion may require. The poet himself, in this instance, tells us that the earlier touches of the picture grew out of what he had seen and heard in the pine-woods of Ravenna. I can scarcely doubt that the dark forest, and the brown flowing stream—brown with a clearness like that of a cairngorm crystal —were a reminiscence of the Etrurian shades of Vallombrosa, that even the fair lady gathering flowers

had a human original, whom he had seen in the springtide of his own life and hers, gathering the springtide flowers in the brightness of a rejoicing youth.

Yet one other landscape comes to my remembrance before I pass on to another region of my subject. Shadows of evening are falling as Dante and his guides, Virgil and Sordello, are climbing the Mount of Purgatory. It is proposed that before the daylight fades they should find a resting-place in a kind of happy valley, where the souls of kings and other great ones of the earth are waiting for the beginning of their discipline :—

> "'Twixt hill and plain a winding path did trend,
> Which led within the bosom of the vale
> To where the ledge doth more than half descend
> Gold, silver, crimson, ceruse' splendour pale,
> The Indian wood so lucent and serene,
> Fresh emerald, when its outer coat doth scale,
> Placed in that vale the plants and flowers between,
> Would each and all be found surpassed in hue,
> As less by greater overpowered is seen ;
> Nor did we Nature's painting only view,
> But of a thousand fragrant odours sweet
> She made a mingled perfume strange and new."
> —*Purg.* vii. 70–81.

Here, again, we have a description in which we trace much more than the conventional language of the average poet. I agree with Mr. Ruskin in thinking that the list of colours it gives is precisely that of those which might be found in the paint-box of an artist whose chief work it was to illuminate MSS. with the angels, roses, violets, lilies, strawberries, which attract us as we look over the missals or the anthem-books of the thirteenth or fourteenth century. With these colours, Dante's own work as a painter of angels must have made him familiar. It is probable even that his

business as a member of the Guild of Apothecaries at Florence extended, as was common at the time, to the sale of artists' pigments, as well as drugs. In that mingling of many odours I am disposed to trace not only the memory of the fragrance of meadow-sweet, or rose, or thyme borne upon the breeze of spring, but, perhaps, also that blending of many odours which belongs to the laboratory of the chemist, who does by his art what Nature is represented here as working by a more subtle spell, and thus, in his turn, "makes a mingled perfume strange and new."

It is time that I should turn to another region of the natural world, in which we note in Dante not only the vivid presentation of beauty of form and character, but a keen insight into all the manifold aspects of the life of animals. I will start with a series of descriptions which connect themselves with the art of falconry as practised in the fourteenth century. That form of sport is now so obsolete that we find it difficult to understand the charm which it once had for men of all classes and conditions. The secret of that charm was, I take it, that it implied the skill of taming and training the living creatures which seemed less tractable, till they were amenable to man's discipline, and were subject to his will. The falcon became the friend and companion of his master almost as much as the pointer or the retriever. And so it took its place among the favoured sports of knights and nobles, and the Emperor Frederick II. did not think it beneath his dignity to write an elaborate treatise on the art of falconry, and to give rules for the management of the birds themselves. The passages which I am about to quote show that Dante wrote of it as an expert.

Here is a picture of the bird who fails to find his prey, and returns to his perch :

"And as the falcon after lengthened flight,
Who seeing neither bird, nor lure, finds blame,
And makes his master cry, 'What! dost alight?'
Whence quick he started, wheels his weary frame
A hundred times, and settles far apart
From where his master stands, in sullen shame."
—*Hell*, xvii. 127–132.

Or, again, when the hawk chases the wild duck:—

"Not otherwise than this the duck doth make
Her sudden plunge, when nears the falcon's flight,
And he flies up, much vexed, with wings that ache."
—*Hell*, xxii. 130–132.

Or, once again, the poet's mind reverting ever and anon to the favourite sport of his early manhood:—

"Like falcon that its glance below doth fling,
Then turns him to the call, and forward darts,
Through strong desire for food, with eager wing,
So acted I." —*Purg* xix 64–67.

Or, yet once more:—

"As falcon from his hood just issuing out,
Moving his head and fluttering either wing,
In eager will and beauty flits about."—*Par.* xix. 34–36.

That group is, I think, sufficiently suggestive. The poet shows that he possesses the power of the keen observer, who notes the element of character in the life of animals as well as their more outward phenomena. Or take the two comparisons with which he illustrates the condition of the sinners who are tormented in their gulf of seething pitch. They are:—

"As dolphins, when they signal give at sea
To sailors, with their backs all arched amain,
So that they plan how best the storm to flee.
* * * * *
And, as along a ditch's watery ways
Are seen the frogs with muzzles all thrust out,
So that their feet and bulk are hid from gaze,
So stood the sinners everywhere about"—*Hell*, xxii. 19–27.

Or take a picture of the flight of birds. He sees the souls who have yielded to sensual passions, driven to and fro by the wind:—

> "And as the starlings through the wintry sky
> Float on their wings in squadron long and dense,
> So doth that storm the sinful souls sweep by.
> * * * * *
> And as the cranes fly chanting out their lays
> And in the air form into lengthened line,
> So those I looked on wailing went their ways."
> —*Hell*, v. 40–48.

Or later on in the same Canto, as though the flight of birds had an irresistible fascination for him:—

> "And e'en as doves, when love its call has given,
> With open steady wings to their sweet nest
> Fly, by their will borne onward through the heaven."
> —*Hell*, v 82–84.

Cranes attract him once more later on:—

> "And then as cranes which this and that way flee,
> Or to Rhipæan hills, or parchèd sand,
> From frost these, sun those, seeking to be free"
> —*Purg*. xxvi. 43–45.

And the eye which thus watched the movements of birds was quick to notice also those of insects. He sees the souls in the last circle of Purgatory greeting each other as with a kiss of peace:—

> "So oft, within their dusk-brown host, proceed
> This ant and that, till muzzle muzzle meet;
> Spying their way, or how affairs succeed."
> —*Purg* xxvi. 34–36.

The picture reminds one almost of Sir John Lubbock's ant studies, or the remarkable passage describing ant-life in Bishop Ken's *Hymnotheo*.[1] In

[1] Ken's poems are so little known, that it is I think, worth while quoting part of the passage to which I have referred. The last two lines, it will be noticed, are almost a paraphrase of Dante's picture.

some instances that keen eye of his saw analogies which almost startle us in their defiance of conventionality, from which an average poet would have shrunk, but which he ventures on with an almost sublime audacity. He wishes to indicate how the souls of the blessed clothe themselves with their garment of light, and he finds his similitude in the silk-worm. The soul speaks to the pilgrim :—

> "Thy great joy hides me from thee, and doth pour
> Its radiance round about me, and conceals,
> Like creature whom its own silk covers o'er."
>
> —*Par.* viii. 52–54

He sees the soul of Adam in Paradise, and the great father of the human race testifies his joy in seeing him by a tremulous motion, visible through that

> "They never idle, no one hour misspend,
> But gladly on their daily tasks attend,
> See how they come and go in straightest lines,
> As they begin or perfect their designs,
> In multitudes they march, yet order just,
> No adverse files each other stop or thrust.
>
> * * *
>
> Before the sickle reaps the loaded ears,
> The six-legg'd nation in the field appears;
> Of wheat sagaciously they choose the prime,
> And up the stalk the sprightly insects climb;
> They nip the grain, while they who watch below,
> With the fall'n cargoes to their caverns go;
> They gauge the seeds, and to their different weights
> Proportion the just number of their mates;
> The various loads they carry or protrude,
> Till in their barn the harvest they include.
>
> * * * * *
>
> When sudden showers surprise them by the way,
> At the approach of a warm, sunny day,
> Lest it should must, they bring it out again,
> In the meridian sun to dry the grain;
> Beyond their annual food, foreseeing dearth,
> Biennial stores they treasure under earth.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Along the middle runs a street direct,
> Which ways transverse and equal intersect;
> Within whose walks the busy people meet,
> Of their affairs there amicably treat."

garment of light, and this also suggests a comparison drawn from the animal world :—

> "As oft we see some creature struggling still,
> All covered up, and every motion shows
> How much he strives his longing to fulfil,
> So did that soul primeval then disclose,
> So that it shone through all its covering bright,
> What joy to meet my wish within it rose."
> —*Par.* xxvi. 97–102.

What animal the poet has in view we are left to guess. To me it seems that our choice is limited to two, a dog or a cat, and I own that I incline to the latter. Few animals possess in equal measure the power of testifying their joy, as it does by the sound of its purring and the undulating motion of its body which accompanies it, visible even when it is covered over with a soft silk coverlet. It falls in with this view that Dante is said to have had a pet cat which he trained up to the point of standing on its hind legs and holding a lighted candle.

The various aspects of the shepherd's life, as he had seen it on the slopes of the Apennines, naturally supplied the poet with not a few pictures :—

> "As tender ewes from out the sheep-fold stray,
> By ones, twos, threes, and others timid stand,
> While on the ground their eyes and noses play,
> And what the foremost doth, that doth the band,
> Around her pressing, if to halt she chance,
> Quiet, though why they do not understand"
> —*Purg.* iii. 79.

A passage in one of Dante's prose works presents a striking parallel, and shows how the fact described impressed itself on the mind of the observer :—

"If a sheep were to leap over a precipice more than a thousand feet high, all the rest would follow; and if one jumps in crossing a path, all the others

jump also, however little occasion there may be for such an act. I myself once saw many leap into a well, because one leapt into it, mistaking it, perhaps, for a low wall, though the shepherd, with cries, and tears, and outstretched arms, tried to stop them." —*Conv.* i. 11.

Another picture comes from *Purg.* xxvii. 76–90. Dante and his two companions, Virgil and Statius, have nearly reached the summit of the Mountain of Purgatory. Night falls, and they take shelter in the cleft of a rock :—

"As are the goats that on the mountain heights,
Ere they are fed, full wild and wanton bound,
Then tame and still, to chew the cud delight,
Hushed in the shade, while all is glare around,
Watched by the shepherd, who upon his rod
Leans, and, so leaning, keeps them safe and sound.
And, as the goatherd, outside his abode,
Doth by his slumbering flock his nightwatch keep,
Guarding lest beast of prey should make inroad,
So were we three then seen in silence deep,
I as the goat, and e'en as goatherd they,
On either side hemmed in by craggy steep.
Little we saw of what beyond us lay,
But through that little I beheld each star,
Larger than is their wont, with brighter ray"

Dogs, in like manner, supply him with many similitudes. The souls in one of the pits of Hell seek to defend themselves against the smoke and burning sands of their torment :—

"Not otherwise in summer dogs are seen,
Moving or head or foot, when they by bite
Of fleas, or flies, or gadflies vexed have been.
—*Hell*, xvii. 49–51.

Virgil, as in *Æn.* vi. 417–420, throws a sop to Cerberus :—

"And as a dog who, craving food, doth stand
Barking, grows quiet while his food he gnaws,
And feels and fights at hunger's fierce command."
—*Hell*, vi 28–30.

A demon pursues one of his victims :—

"He flung him down, and on the hard rock bare
He turned, and never mastiff unleashed sped
With steps so swift the hunted thief to tear."
—*Hell*, xxi. 43–45

And again :—

"Then with the furious rage and madness sheer,
With which upon a beggar dogs rush on,
Who, on a sudden, halts and asks alms there."
—*Hell*, xxi. 67–69

Even in the three symbolic beasts, which meet the pilgrim as he scales the Delectable Mountain, we find a vividness of portraiture which implies that Dante had seen their living prototypes :—

"And lo! just as the sloping side I gain,
A leopard supple, lithe, exceeding fleet,
Whose skin full many a dusky spot did stain."

* * * * *

And of the lion :—

"He seemed as if upon me he would leap,
With head upraised, and hunger fierce and wild,
So that a shudder through the air did sweep,
Then a she-wolf, with all ill greed defiled,
Laden with hungry leanness terrible,
That many nations of their peace beguiled."
—*Hell*, i. 31–51

I add two more descriptions to the gallery of pictures from bird life :—

"As bird, within the leafy home it loves,
Upon the nest its sweet young fledglings share,
Resting, while night hides all that lives and moves,

Who, to behold the objects of her care,
And find the food that may their hunger stay,
Tasks in which all grave labours grateful are,—
Forestalls the dawn, and, on an open spray,
With keen desire awaits the sun's clear light,
And upward looks as gleams the new-born day!"
—*Par.* xxiii. 1–9.

"E'en as the doves, who through the meadows stray,
Gathering or grain or darnel tranquilly,
And not a whit their wonted pride display,
If aught they see which them doth terrify,
Will of a sudden cease to seek their food,
Because a greater care constrains to fly"
—*Purg.* ii 124–129

The two following passages tell their own tale :—

"As when a lizard, 'neath the fiery reign
O' the dog-days, seeks to change its hedgerow bourne,
It seems like lightning to dart o'er the plain."
—*Hell*, xxv. 79–81.

"As swarm of bees that deep in flowerets move,
One moment, and the next again return,
Where that their labour doth its sweetness prove."
—*Par.* xxxi. 7–10.

But beyond these descriptions of animal and nanimate life, we have a whole gallery of pictures drawn from human, and especially from child, life. There are, I conceive, few indications that a poet possesses the higher and deeper elements of his art more precious than such pictures. Among our own poets, Wordsworth and Keble will, I imagine, be recognised as special examples of that excellent gift, but I think that the passages I am about to bring together may well challenge comparison with either. If I were an artist with a gift like Reynolds, or Eddis, or Sant, I should desire no better exercise of my power than to paint them all, and to publish the col lection as an illustrated companion to Keble's *Lyra*

Innocentium. The fact that, in almost every case, the mother is brought into the picture, as well as the child, seems to me to throw light on Dante's character, possibly also on his own boy-life, all the more valuable because his direct references to that boy-life are few and far between.

A mother risks her life for her child, as Virgil rescues his friend:—

> "Then suddenly my Guide his arms did fling
> Around me, as a mother, roused by cries,
> Sees the fierce flames around her gathering,
> And takes her boy, nor ever halts, but flies,
> Caring for him than for herself far more,
> Though one scant shift her only robe supplies."
> —*Hell*, xxiii 37–42.

That last homely, individualising touch seems to me to be one that could only come from an eye-witness, which may probably have come from one on whom the scene had made an indelible impression, because he had himself been a sharer in it, and I ask myself, Was the Florentine poet that child saved from the burning fire? Here is the mother as the child's refuge in trouble:—

> "I to the left with wistful look did start,
> As when an infant seeks his mother's breast,
> When fear or anguish vex his troubled heart."
> —*Purg.* xxx. 43–45.

Here is the child that has done wrong confessing its fault:—

> "As little children, dumb with shame's keen smart,
> Will listening stand with eyes upon the ground,
> Owning their faults with penitential heart,
> So then stood I." —*Purg.* xxxi. 64.

And here a *replica* of the first picture:—

> "Oppressed with this amazement, to my guide
> I turned me, like a little child who goes
> For refuge there where he doth most confide,
> And she, like mother, who, to give repose,
> Turns quickly to her pale and breathless boy,
> With voice that's wont to soothe him and compose."
> —*Par.* xxii. 1–6.

And here, the child's smile and act of content as the type of the joy of the souls in Paradise:—

> "And as a babe that to its mother's breast,
> When it hath had its fill, doth stretch its hand,
> So they their love by flame made manifest"
> —*Par* xxiii 121–123

And here, the mother's love under the most trying of all afflictions:—

> "And she, first breathing out a pitying sigh,
> Turned her full gaze, with such a look on me,
> As mother on her boy's insanity."—*Par.* i 100–102

And here, his picture of the new-created soul:—

> "Forth from His hands whose acts His love attest,
> Ere yet it be, as child the soul is brought,
> Weeping and smiling, prattling and caressed,—
> The soul so simple that it knoweth nought
> But this, that from a joyous Maker sprung,
> It turns to that which with delight is fraught"
> —*Purg.* xvi. 85–90.

So far I have, I think, furnished sufficient materials for an induction. The reader will have felt, if I mistake not, that they supply proof that simply in his character as an observer of the natural phenomena that met his eyes every day in his walks near Florence or Ravenna, apart from all higher thoughts and deeper meanings, Dante holds his place among the sovran poets of the world.

DANTE THE TRAVELLER

II

I pass from the phenomena of animal and child life to the scenes which met Dante's eyes in the cities of Italy. And, first, I note as eminently characteristic of Italian mediæval life, a picture of the winner and the loser in street gambling :—

> "When game of *Zara* cometh to an end,
> The loser stays behind in sorrowing mood ;
> Goes o'er his throws again, and fain would mend .
> Off with the other moveth all the crowd ,
> One walks before, one closely clings behind,
> And, at his side, of notice one is proud.
> He pauses not, this friend nor that doth mind,
> And he who gets his hand no more doth press ,
> Thus through the throng his safe way he doth wind."
> —*Purg.* vi 1-9.

Rome supplies, as might be expected, more than one painting to the gallery. Take, *e.g.*, this of the crowds of pilgrims who, in the first great jubilee proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII. in A.D. 1300, were seen crossing the Bridge of St. Angelo at Rome, to the old Basilica of St. Peter's :—

> "E'en as the Romans, for the countless host
> That cross the bridge in year of jubilee,
> Of their new way of passing o'er may boast,
> For on one side all turn their face to see
> The Castle, as to Peter's shrine they go,
> And on the other to the Mount move free "
> —*Hell,* xviii 28–33.

Or this, of the emotions of these pilgrims as they looked on the Veronica or sacred napkin, on which it was believed that the features of the Christ had been impressed :—

> "As one who from Croatia, say, draws nigh,
> Upon our Veronica's face to glance,
> Whom the old story does not satisfy,

Says, while he sees it, as in wondering trance,
'My Lord, my Jesus Christ, true deity,
Was this indeed Thy very countenance?' "
—*Par.* xxxi. 103–108.

Or this, of the reverence with which they looked on the very stones of the Eternal City, as contrasted with the rougher northern regions from which they came, and in which he finds a parallel to his own emotions as he entered Heaven.—

" If strangers, bred beneath some far-off sky,
Where day by day revolves fair Helice,
With that her son in whom her joy doth lie,[1]
Gazing on Rome and all her majesty,
Were struck with wonder, when the Lateran
Was eminent above all things that be,
I, who to God had now passed on from man,
From time to that which shares eternal day,
From Florence to a people just and sane—
Think what amazement then my soul did sway
Truly with this, and with the joy, 'twas mine
To have no wish to hear, nor words to say
And, as a pilgrim who, with eager eyne,
Finds, gazing on a temple, full delight,
And hopes some day to tell how fair the shrine,
So, as I walked amid that living light,
On all around I also cast mine eye,
Now up, now down, and circling left or right."
—*Par* xxxi. 31–48

Or this, of the dockyard at Venice:—

" As when Venetian ships in dock remain,
The clammy pitch boils up in winter-tide,
To fit their unsound hulls for sea again,
They cannot put to sea, so there abide,
One mends the timber and one caulks anew
The ribs of ship that many a sea has tried;
There one the stem and one the stern drives through;
Some fashion oars and some the cordage twine,
The mainsail or the mizen some renew."
—*Hell*, xxi. 7–15.

[1] Helice=Callisto, the constellation *Ursa Major.* Her "son"=the Pole-star

The whole scene of bustling activity rises before me as I read the lines, and I seem to see the Florentine poet gazing with interest on a life so unlike his own, accompanied, it may be, by Marco Polo, the great Eastern traveller, who was then living at Venice, and from whose life Dante may have heard tales of far-off lands, of the constellation of the Southern Cross, never seen in our northern latitudes, of the disappearance of the Pole Star and the Great Bear, of the surpassing brightness of the stars in the tropical regions to which the enterprise of his friend had carried him. (*Purg*. i. 23.)

Or take the scene, almost as characteristic of modern as of mediæval Italy, as one passes by the doors of churches on some great festival for which indulgences have been promised :—

"E'en thus the blind, whose means of life are stopped,
  Stand at our Pardons asking alms for bread,
  And one man's head is on another's dropped,
That pity may in others' hearts be shed,
  Not only at the sound of words they speak,
  But at the sight which no less grief hath bred"
—*Purg* xiii. 61–65.

The leaning tower of Bologna, known as the Carisenda, supplies another picture :—

"And as to eyes that Carisenda see,
  When 'neath its sloping tower there comes a cloud,
  It seems to bend with motion contrary."
—*Hell*, xxxi. 136–138.

Or take the wilder landscape of the Casentino Valley of the Upper Arno :—

"The little streamlets that from each green hill
  Of Casentino down to Arno go,
  And form full many a cool and pleasant rill."
—*Hell*, xxx. 64–66.

Or this, of the torrent of Acquacheta in the Apennines:—

"I followed him, and soon a spot we neared,
Where sound of falling waters came so hoarse,
That, when we spake, our voices scarce were heard,
E'en as that stream which takes its separate course,
And from Mount Veso eastward first doth flow,
And down the Apennino's left slope pours,
Which men above as Acquacheta know,
Ere it rush down into its torrent bed,
And lose that name at Forli far below,
Above San Benedetto murmurs dread,
From Alps, whence it in single leap doth run,
Where should be room for full a thousand head."
—*Hell*, xvi. 91–102

Or this of the birthplace of St. Francis:—

"Between Tupino and the streams that break
From the hill chosen by Ubaldo blest,
A lofty mountain fertile slope doth make,
Perugia heat and cold from that high crest
Feeleth, and Gualdo and Nocera pine
Behind it, by their heavy yoke opprest;
On that slope, where less steeply doth incline
The hill, was born into this world a sun,
Bright as this orb doth oft o'er Ganges shine."
—*Par.* xi. 43–51.

Or this of the scenery round the Lago di Garda and the river that flows from it:—

"A lake there is in our fair Italy,
At the Alp's foot that shuts Lamagna[1] in,
Benaco, where the Tyrol low doth lie.
By thousand streams and more the Apennine,
I trow is bathed, which in the lake are pent,
Camonica and Garda's bounds within
A place there is midway where he of Trent
Chief Shepherd, and Verona's, Brescia's too,
Might each give blessing, if that way he went;

[1] Germany.

There Peschiera's fortress, bulwark true
 To face the strength of them of Bergamo,
 And Brescia, where a lower shore we view;
There needs must be that all the waters go,
 Which fair Benaco's bosom fails to hold,
 And through green pastures, like a river, flow.
Soon as the current leaves its channel old,
 No more Benaco, Mincio it is styled,
 Till at Governo with the Po 'tis rolled,
Nor far it runs before a low waste wild
 It finds, and spreads into a marshy lake,
 And taints the summer with its mist defiled."

—*Hell*, xx 61–81.

It is time, however, that I should pass on to that section of my inquiry which brings before us Dante's power of observing and describing the phenomena which met his eyes in regions that were altogether new to him, and in which we follow him in his wanderings as a traveller. That, as the experience of all readers of travels will bear witness, is the test that makes the difference, as in the old story of "Eyes and no Eyes, or the Art of Seeing," in Mrs. Barbauld's "Evenings at Home," between the observing and the unobserving eye, between the dull apathetic intellect which sees indistinctly, and remembers vaguely, and that which is quick to see new phenomena, "wax to receive and marble to retain." A comparison of such passages will have the further interest of helping us to trace the poet's wanderings, and so to fill up what would otherwise be as blank pages in his biography.

Here then is his description of what modern engineering has transformed into the great Cornice Road along the shores of the Mediterranean, but which was then a steep and precipitous mountain path testing both the eyes and the legs of travellers:—

"Now towards the mountain's base our footsteps sped,
 And there we found the precipice so steep,
 That all in vain had been the nimblest tread.

The rocks that Lerici and Turbia keep,
The barest and most broken, were a stair
Compared with that, which one might lightly leap."
—*Purg* iii 46–51.

Here is another picture from the western section of the same road, a reminiscence probably of the same journey :—

" Oft doth the peasant churl a gap more wide
Close with a pitchfork full of briar or thorn,
When the grape's clusters are by autumn dyed,
Than was the pathway where we then did turn,
My Guide and I, as I behind him sped,
When-as that troop away from us was borne.
Sanleo one may scale, down Noli tread,
To Bismantova's topmost height aspire,
With feet alone , here needs one wings instead,
Swift wings, I mean, and pinions of desire.
* * * * *
We mounted up that broken rock-path through :
And on each side its barriers hemmed us in,
And the ground called for feet and hand-grasp too."
—*Purg* iv. 19–33.

Or these memories of travels on the higher Alps, possibly St. Gothard, or the Simplon, or Mount Cenis. He describes what he sees in Hell :—

"And over all the sand a fiery spray
Showered rain of flakes of ever-spreading flame."

And this, he says, was :—

" Like snow upon the Alps on windless day."
—*Hell*, xiv. 28–30.

He remembers the bewildering, blinding mist which so often baffles the mountain traveller :—

"Bethink thee, Reader, if, on Alpine height,
A cloud hath wrapt thee, through which thou hast seen,
As the mole through its membrane sees the light,

How when the vapours moist and dense begin
Themselves to scatter, then the sun's bright sphere
All feebly enters in the clouds between"
—*Purg* xvii. 1–6.

He describes the great landslip near the Lago di Garda :—

"The place where down the bank our way we took
Was Alp-like, and the view that met us there,
Such that for fear each eye away would look.
So doth that ruin beyond Trent appear
Which on the flank into the Adige dashed
Through earthquake, or through prop that failed to bear;
For from the mountain-top whence down it crashed,
E'en to the plain the rock so falls away,
That one above might climb o'er stones detached."
—*Hell*, xii. 1–9.

Let us follow him further on in his journey through France. He comes to Arles with its old Roman cemetery, filled with sarcophagi, now known as the Alyscamp (Champs Elysées) :—

"As where the Rhone stagnates o'er Arli's plain,
Or as at Pola near Quarnaro's shore,
Italia's limit, bordered by the main,
With sepulchres the earth is studded o'er"
—*Hell*, ix. 112–115.

He narrates the triumphant flight of the Roman Eagle under Cæsar in words which, though not descriptive, speak, I think, of the accurate knowledge of personal travel :—

"And what it did from Varo to the Rhene,
By Isar, Arar, Seine, and every vale
That pays its tribute to the Rhone was seen."
—*Par.* vi. 58–60.

We follow him further on in his wanderings, and find him attending lectures in the schools at Paris :—

"There dwelleth Sigieri's light eterne,
Who, lecturing in the street surnamed of straw,[1]
Truths syllogised that made men's envy burn."
—*Par.* x. 136–138.

Or further East to the rivers of Germany, probably the Moselle or Rhine :—

"As boats that oft the river's banks receive,
And half is in the water, half on land,
And as, in clime where full-fed Germans live,
The beaver for his foray takes his stand."[2]
—*Hell*, xvii. 19–22.

That route takes him naturally to Cologne, and there he notes a local peculiarity of monastic dress, which he had not seen in Italy, and of which the souls of the hypocrites he sees in Hell remind him :—

"A painted people there met our regard,
Who round and round still moved with tardy pace,
Weeping, with faces worn and spent and marred,
Cloaks had they, with hoods low o'er eyes and face
Down-hanging, made in fashion like to those
Which at Cologne are worn by monkish race."
—*Hell*, xxiii. 58–63.

From Cologne we follow him through the Netherlands to Bruges and the adjacent country :—

"Now on a margin firm we travel o'er,
And the stream's vapour so the heat doth slake
It saves from fire the water and the shore
E'en as 'twixt Bruges and Guizzant Flemings make,
Fearing the flood that on their sea-beach rose,
A bank whereon the ocean's strength may break."
—*Hell*, xv. 1–6

The Guizzant here named I identify with Wissant on the French coast, between Calais and Boulogne.

[1] The Rue de Fouarre—the Haymarket of Mediæval Paris—where, it was said, the students used to sit on bundles of straw, listening to their lecturers.
[2] The beaver, it may be noted, is not found in the rivers of Italy or France

It is now a poor village, a mile or two from the sea, and the sand has silted up its harbour, and Calais has risen as it decayed; but in Dante's time it was the port of embarkation, as Calais is now, for England; and, I may add, it was a place which few travellers would, in the common course of things, visit, except for the purpose of so embarking. This alone would make it probable that Dante took ship there and sailed up the Thames to London; and so we are able, as it were, to welcome the great poet's arrival in England. Of that visit we have at least one trace in his poem. He meets in Hell with Guy de Montfort, the assassin of an English prince, Henry, son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, the brother of Henry III.:

"A shade he showed us, on one side, alone,
And said, 'In God's own lap[1] he pierced the heart,
Which held in honour on the Thames is known."
—*Hell*, xii 118–120.

As a matter of history, the heart of the murdered prince, enclosed in a golden vase, was placed on the tomb of Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey, and so far we have reasonable ground for thinking of Dante as having walked to and fro in what we may well call the great national sanctuary of England's history. That inference is confirmed by a line in Boccaccio's Epistle to Petrarch, in which he speaks of Dante as having visited *Parisios dudum extremosque Britannos;* and Boccaccio, we may remember, was intimately acquainted with Dante's nephew, and with many Florentines who had been his personal friends. It is strengthened further by the statement of an Italian bishop, Giovanni de Serravalle, who, in 1414, during the Session of the Council of Constance, wrote a Latin translation of Dante's great poem, at

[1] The young prince was murdered as he was in the act of receiving the consecrated Host, and was thus, as it were, in the very bosom of God.

the request of two English prelates, one of whom (I name the fact with a natural local interest) was Bishop Bubwith of Bath and Wells, the founder of our Wells Almshouse, the builder of part of our Cathedral, and he states that Dante visited London, and had lodgings in Cheapside, and further, that he studied at Oxford as well as Paris. That statement seems to me, as I have previously said, to be in itself probable enough. It was characteristic of that period of European history, when books were few and dear, that students seeking for wider knowledge went from one country to another, and scholars of all nations were, therefore, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to be found at Oxford. And at Oxford, during the earlier part of Dante's life, there was a scholar, Roger Bacon, born at Ilchester, in Somersetshire, whose scientific reputation was spread over Western Europe, who had written three encyclopædic treatises and sent them to Pope Clement IV. at Rome, who was a "Master of those who know" in all the sciences in which Dante most delighted—astronomy, mathematics, optics, music. I have elsewhere (*Contemporary Review*, December 1881) shown that there are coincidences between the writings of the Oxford and those of the Florentine student, which can scarcely be accounted for except on the supposition that Dante, the younger of the two, was acquainted with the writings of the elder. If I cannot say that his residence at Oxford takes its place as an established historical fact, it seems to me one of those cases in which the convergence of tradition and internal evidence tends to establish a very high degree of probability.[1]

Shall I startle my readers if I go one step further

[1] I welcome the fact that Mr H. C. Maxwell Lyte, in his *History of the University of Oxford* (pp 89, 90) recognises the probability.

and trace the poet's travels to a region in which I, for one, have, as I have just said, a strong personal interest? They shall hear and judge. He is describing his vision in Paradise, of the souls of the great teachers of theology, who move circling round and round, as they chant the praises of the Ever Blessed Three in One. And this is what he says:—

"Then, like a clock, that calls us, as by law,
What time the Bride of God from sleep doth rise,
With matin praise her Bridegroom's love to draw,
When the one wheel upon the other flies,
Sounding '*Ding-dong, ding-dong*,' with note so sweet,
That souls attuned feel love's high ecstasies,
So saw I then that glorious circle fleet
Around, and voice to voice make melody,
So rich that none may know it as complete,
Save there, where joy endures eternally."
—*Par.* x 139–148.

Clocks of that description were, in Dante's time, far from common, and I take it that he describes it because he looked on it as a piece of mechanism specially noteworthy. I cannot, so far as I have searched, and I have applied to experts of high authority, find any record of such a clock in Italy, Germany, or France, before the middle of the fourteenth century. But in England there was, at some time or other in the first quarter of that century, a clock such as Dante describes, and it was to be found then at the great Benedictine Abbey of Glastonbury. It is to be seen now in the Cathedral of Wells, and the figures revolve still, as they or their predecessors revolved nearly six centuries ago.[1] Can that, I ask myself, represent the clock that Dante looked on? Did he come to Glastonbury? If I am unable to

[1] The actual works of the clock are, at present, lent to the South Kensington Museum, but the knights in armour that move when the clock strikes are still in the Cathedral.

answer that question in the affirmative, I can at least suggest some confirmation of such an answer over and above the correspondence between the clock and the description.

(1) The fact that such a clock existed would, we cannot doubt, be much talked of among all men of theoretical or applied science. The numerous pilgrims who came to Glastonbury would carry away with them, whithersoever they went, a report of its wondrous mechanism. Dante was pre-eminently the kind of man likely to be interested in such a novelty, and to think it worth while to take a long journey to examine it.

(2) Among the earlier forms of European literature, which Dante studied, few seem to have exercised a greater fascination over him than those of the cycle of the Arthurian legends. He refers to them in the story of Francesca (*Hell*, v. 128); in *Hell*, xxxii. 62; in *Par.* xvi. 15, and frequently in his prose writings. For us, even with the revived interest in the story of Arthur which may be traced to Lord Tennyson's poem, those legends do not excite any very passionate enthusiasm. We may discuss the localities named in them, but these localities are not the object of our pilgrimages. But in the fourteenth century it was otherwise. An Italian poet of that period (Fazio degli Uberti, grandson of the Farinata of *Hell*, x. 32), who wrote a kind of poetical guide-book for travellers, in triple rhyme, mentions, when he comes to speak of England, the things which were indispensable for every traveller to see, and among these were the Tower of Guinevere, Merlin's Cave, and the ruined Palace of Camelot; and Camelot is identified with South Cadbury in Somerset. I need scarcely remind my readers that Glastonbury was, in its turn, identified with the centre of all the Arthurian stories, that it was

the Isle of Avalon, the burial-place of the heroic king. I fancy that Dante would have gone a long way round to have seen that grave, and to picture to himself the scenery of the *Morte d'Arthur*.

(3) Lastly, recent researches, for communicating the result of which I have to thank Bishop Hobhouse and Canon Church, have shown that in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, and probably for a long time before, there were constant business transactions between bankers of Florence, on the one side, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells, and the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral City, on the other. The bankers collected first-fruits and annates, and a six years' tithe for the crusade contemplated by Pope Clement V. and the Emperor Henry VII. They also acted as collectors of tithes and rents for foreign non-resident ecclesiastics, who held livings in the diocese. Their agents must have been going backwards two or three times a year between Florence, Paris, London, and Somerset. And the foremost at this time, almost the only—name in these transactions is that of those who are described in one document as the *Societas Bardorum*, in another, as "*Nos chers Marchands de la Compagnie des Bardi*." And Bardi —Simon de' Bardi—was, it will be remembered, the name of the rich merchant prince who married Dante's Beatrice. Intercourse between the poet and the firm of bankers was probably at one time, during the seven years of Beatrice's married life, of which Dante's *Vita Nuova* is the record, very frequent and familiar. They took opposite sides, it is true, in politics, and probably, after Dante's exile, they did not see much of each other, but the acquaintance, while it lasted, would probably lead to Dante's knowing of the news which the Bardi agents brought back from Somerset, and so the wonders of the clock and the grave at

Avalon may have both become objects of special interest to him.

I think I have made it not incredible that the great poet may have visited Glastonbury. If so, I cannot for a moment believe that he would have turned back on his return journey without having been to Wells. He may have gazed on the glories of Bishop Jocelyn's then recent work, on the sculptures of its west front, and may have worshipped at its altars.[1]

[1] One other fact may be mentioned as supplying points of local contact, though I feel that, as yet, it suggests questions rather than conclusions. *Purg.* xxxiii 78. Beatrice bids Dante keep in memory the apocalyptic vision with which that section of the poem ends:

. "As pilgrims, palm in hand, their path pursue"

The image is drawn from the common practice of pilgrims to the Holy Land in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They brought back a palm-branch as a token that they had completed their pilgrimage, and might claim the indulgence promised on its completion Commonly they brought their palms to some church or sacred station and laid them on the altar as a votive offering. This is the explanation given by experts of the fact that the burial-ground attached to the Cathedral of Wells, in which there formerly stood a Lady Chapel, destroyed under Edward VI., was known in old records both as the "Palm" and the "Pardon" Churchyard. I am not aware that such names are found anywhere else in England, or, indeed, in Europe, and I ask the question, Did Dante see the procession of palm-bearing pilgrims within the walls of the Cathedral?

PORTRAITS OF DANTE

Of the many pictures, engravings, busts, which purport to represent the author of the *Commedia*, two only, those which form the frontispieces to the last two volumes of this edition, have any claim to be regarded as authentic likenesses. It may be well to give some account of each, based for the most part upon the following papers in the *Transactions* of the *Deutsche Dante Gesellschaft*.

(1) Der Schadel Dante's, by H. Welcker. I. pp. 35–56.

(2) Die Todten Maske, das Florentiner Fresco-bildniss und die Kiste des Frate Santi, by Karl Witte. I. pp. 57–71.

(3) Dante's Portrait, by Theodor Savi II. pp. 261–330.

I. The Bargello Portrait.

In the Life of Giotto, written circ. 1405 by Filippo Villani, it is recorded that that painter had introduced portraits of himself and of Dante in a painting on the walls of the chapel of the Palace of the Podestà, now known as that of the Bargello (=chief of police). No mention of the portrait occurs in the Life of Dante by the same writer, nor in that of Boccaccio, though the latter gives a somewhat full description of Dante's personal appearance. Bruni of Arezzo (*d.* 1444), in his Life of the poet, is, in like manner, silent as to the Bargello portrait, but speaks of one "by an eminent painter of Dante's time" that was to be seen in the Church of Santa Croce. Manetti (*d.* 1459), Dante's next biographer, speaks of both portraits as extant in his time, and ascribes both to Giotto. Filelfo, who followed Manetti, mentions only the Santa Croce portrait. Vellutelli follows him early in the sixteenth century in this exclusion of the Bargello portrait. Landino towards the close of the fifteenth century (say 1500) names both with the significant words "*resta ancora.*"

With this we close the *catena* of testimony from the earlier biographers. We enter on the evidence supplied by the early historians of art. Of these, Ghiberti (*d.* 1455) speaks of Giotto as having executed paintings for the chapel of the Podestà Palace, but makes no mention of Dante's portrait. Vasari in his *Lives of Painters* seems to take a special interest in noticing whatever connects his own art with the name of Dante, and names no less than five portraits: (1) by himself in the chapel of the monastery at Rimini; (2) by Lorenzo Monaco (circ. 1370) in the Church of the

Trinità at Florence; (3) a wall-painting by Taddeo Gaddi (*d.* 1352) in Santa Croce in the same city; (4) he speaks of the Podestà Palace portrait as still seen in his own time, and while omitting the mention of Giotto having painted his own likeness, states—and he is the first to state it—that the same picture included portraits of Brunetto Latini and Corso Donati. In yet another passage (p. 1087) in his Life of Michael Angelo, Vasari speaks of a portrait of Dante by Giotto in Santa Croce. We are left to conjecture whether this is identical with the painting which, as we have seen, he elsewhere ascribes to Gaddi, or whether the historian has, through a lapse of memory, substituted Santa Croce for the Palace of the Podestà. Anyhow the Santa Croce picture has disappeared, probably in 1566, when the church was subject to extensive alterations. At some unknown date, probably in the seventeenth century, the chapel in the Podestà Palace ceased to be used as such, and was covered with plaster. The palace became the residence of the Bargello, and the picture seemed to be forgotten.

With the revival of Dante studies in Italy attention was naturally drawn to the passages in Villani and Vasari. Moreni, about the beginning of the present century, states that he had sought for them, as others had done before him, for two years in vain. Missirini, who wrote a Life of the poet, made a like ineffectual attempt in 1832. At last, in 1848, the work was taken in hand by Aubrey Bezzi, Richard Henry Wilde of the U.S.A., and Seymour Kirkup, an English artist. They obtained permission from the authorities of Florence to clear the chapel and remove the plaster, and Marini, a painter of Florence, was associated with them in the work. The walls were so covered that there was nothing to guide them, and the process of removing the plaster bit by bit went on slowly. At last on July 21 the long-sought-for goal was reached, and men saw the face of Dante as his contemporaries had seen it. The joy of the discovery was, however, marred by the fact that a nail which Marini had driven into the wall to support a portion of the scaffolding had gone straight through the eye. Matters were not mended when the artist undertook to remedy the disaster by painting a new eye and generally improving (!) the picture, altering the form and colour of the cap, and, in order to avoid shocking the feelings of the then Government by the revolutionary tricolour of the white and green and red which Giotto had used for Dante's dress (we note the colours as those of Beatrice in *Purg.* xxx. 31–36), turning the green into a dark chocolate. With that "counterfeit resemblance" the Dante pilgrims who visit the Bargello Chapel have now to be content, as far as contentment under such conditions is possible

Happily, in the short interval in which it was possible, something was done towards a more faithful and reverent reproduction. Kirkup applied for leave to make a copy of the picture as it was found, and was refused. A silver key, however, secured his admission to the chapel in entire privacy, and he was locked in till the

evening. He took a tracing of the outline, made a careful drawing on paper, and gave them with a coloured sketch which he had secretly made on one of the days of public exhibition, to Lord Vernon. From these materials combined, the chromo-lithograph, published by the Arundel Society, was prepared by Mr. Vincent Brooks, and I am indebted to the same artist for the portrait which forms the frontispiece of the fourth volume of this edition.

For twenty years the authenticity of the portrait was undisputed as being by Giotto. In 1864, however, in connection with the great sex-centenary festival of Dante's birth in the following year, the question was mooted and discussed in journals, and the Minister of Education referred it to two experts, Gaetano Milanesi and Luigi Passerini. On July 9, 1864, they presented a report in which they came to the conclusion that Giotto was not the painter, and that the portrait is, though of earlier date, less trustworthy than that by Michelino in the Duomo or that in the *Codex Riccardiano*, both of which are of the fifteenth century.

The grounds on which this conclusion rests, and in its turn is questioned, are mainly these —

(1) In 1332 the Palace of the Podestà was nearly destroyed by fire (*Vill.* x. 109). The text of the *editio princeps* of Villani indeed says "totally destroyed" (*tutto il detto palagio*), but as there is no previous mention of the palace in the passage where the fact occurs, experts have suggested "*tutto il tetto del palagio*" ("all the roof"), as probably, it is urged, the true reading The chapel is not mentioned. Villani would scarcely have passed over the destruction of its art treasures. Had they perished or been injured, Giotto, who lived till January 1336, had time to restore them. There is accordingly no sufficient ground for rejecting Giotto's authorship to be found in the fire of 1332.

(2) In 1343, according to the Commissioners, the palace was again damaged by fire, or otherwise in the tumults connected with the expulsion of Duke Walter of Athens. Villani (xii 17) gives an account of these tumults, but makes no mention of any fire injuring the palace, nor does any such mention occur in the histories of Florence by Bruni and Machiavelli. The two Commissioners give no authorities, and in the absence of further evidence a verdict of *not proven* must, it is believed, be given as far as this second objection is concerned.

(3) Another doubt rests on the various readings, in the old Italian text of F. Villani's Life of Giotto and that of the Latin original. The former states that Giotto's portrait of Dante was a wall-painting, the other that it was *in tabulâ altaris*, *i.e.*, a separately framed altar-piece It is inferred that the translator altered the Latin text because he saw the fresco painting which was discovered by Mr. Kirkup and his fellow workers, and therefore that this was not the portrait of which Villani had borne record. Against that inference Paul sets the facts: (1) that F. Villani died in 1405; (2) that the translation speaks of a secretary of the republic,

Colluccio Piero, who died in 1406, as living when he wrote, and draws from them the inference that the translation was made in the lifetime of Villani, under the eye of the author, and that the statement as to the portrait being a wall-painting was therefore the correction of an error. On the whole, then, in spite of the report of the Florentine Commissioners, there seems sufficient reason for adhering to the first conclusion of the discoverers of the Bargello portrait that they had found the long-lost treasure.

The subjects of the other paintings of the chapel are, at any rate, thoroughly Dantesque in character. There is a picture of Hell, in which Lucifer appears as Dante describes him in *H.* xxxiv., another of Paradise, above a window, with figures of contemporary characters below it. In the former the Christ is seated on a throne of clouds, surrounded by angels, adored by male saints on one side, by female on the other; among the latter, on the right of the spectator, a figure wearing a crown over his long flowing hair. Near it is a group of three figures, the middle one being that recognised as Dante. On the left of the window is a figure in the red mantle of a cardinal; kneeling before him is that of a Podestà of Florence. All the heads have the marked individuality which indicates portraiture. The two figures in close juxtaposition with Dante have been identified, on the strength of F. Villani and Vasari's statements, as those of Corso Donati and Brunetti Latini. The Florentine Commission see in the crowned figure the likeness of Robert, King of Naples, who visited Florence in 1310, and in the Cardinal, Bertrand del Pogetto, who came ten years later, and who was commissioned by John XXII. to have Dante's remains at Ravenna disinterred as those of a condemned heretic. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, on the other hand, identify the two forms with Charles of Valois and Cardinal Matteo d'Acquasparta, who came on an ineffectual mission of mediation from Boniface VIII. in 1300 and 1301, and conjecture accordingly that this was the date of the portrait.

Other objections with their answers may be briefly noted.

(1) The arms of the Fieschi of Genoa are found near the figure kneeling before the Cardinal. The first of that family who filled the office of Podestà was Fedice dei Fieschi, in 1358. It has been inferred accordingly that that was the date of the painting. Cavalcaselle, however, shows that this had been painted over another coat of arms still dimly traceable, and so that argument goes for nothing.

(2) In an inscription below the figure of the martyr Saint Venantius there is a date MCCC . . . and the Commissioners assume that XXX would fill up the vacant space Cavalcaselle inclines to XX. It may be questioned in either case whether the date belongs to more than the figure under which it stands.

(3) Another inscription records that "HOC OPUS" was made in the time when the office of Podestà was filled by Fidesmini di Varana of Camerino, and the archives of Florence show that that office was twice held by members of the Fidesmini family, in 1311 and 1337.

The Commissioners accept the later of the two dates as consistent with their general theory, Paur replies, following Cavalcaselle, that the words HOC OPUS, as a rule, refer to an individual picture, and not to a whole series covering the walls of a church or chapel, as in the Coronation of the Virgin in the Campo Santo of Pisa. Here again we have a *telum imbelle.* The authenticity of the Bargello portrait has not as yet been disproved; and if by Giotto, the next question that meets us is, when was it painted? The comparative softness of the outlines of chin and cheek hardly admit us to think of it as representing the poet at a later age than thirty, *sc.* in 1295, when Giotto, according to Vasari, was about twenty. If painted at a later date, it must have been from earlier sketches. It is scarcely conceivable that the painter would have introduced Dante's portrait after his condemnation and exile in 1302, and the fact that he is grouped with Corso Donati and Latini points to a time before the breach between the Neri and Bianchi had become prominent, or to one of the brief intervals in which, as has been suggested above, there was a temporary reconciliation between them brought about by the Cardinal of Acquasparta. The fact that other frescoes in the chapel reproduce apparently reminiscences from the *Inferno*, notably the three-headed Lucifer, the Centaur, the sinner carrying his head in his hand, admits of the explanation (1) that they may have been executed at a later date, or (2) that Giotto was already acquainted with some of the leading conceptions of the poems, the commencement of which Dante fixes in 1300. A few points in the picture itself call more or less for special notice (1) The hair is entirely covered by the cap, and so the picture neither confirms nor refutes the conjecture based on the "*flavescere*" of *Ecl.* ii. that it was auburn-tinted in his youth (3) The dress corresponds with that in the Michelino portrait in the Duomo of Florence, and was apparently the ordinary civil dress of the upper class of the time and place. (3) As in the portrait just named, there is a book under the left arm, which may be intended for the *Commedia*, or, more probably, looking to the date of the picture and the age of the figure, may serve as a general symbol of the student life. (4) The right hand holds a twig on which hang three fruits, generally identified as pomegranates, in which men have found a symbol of the three kingdoms of the unseen world or of political unity, the many seeds of the pomegranate representing the multitude of citizens in the one polity, i, lastly, the "sweet fruits" for which the poet expresses his longing *H.* xvi. 61, An allusive reference to the pomegranates is found in a MS. vision of one of the Alberti at the end of the fourteenth (?) century, in which the two poets Dante and Petrarch are described, the one crowned with laurel and the other holding a twig with "*dolci pomi*" on it, and to the book and the crimson dress in a sonnet of Pucci's and belonging to the next century. Fraticelli (*V. D.* 268) mentions another portrait with the pomegranates as to be seen in the Giotto frescoes of the Scrovigni Chapel at Padua; but no such figure is, as a matter of fact, to be found there. A figure

at the left hand of Giotto's "Triumph of Chastity" at Assisi has been identified with Dante, but Witte comes to the conclusion that it presents no adequate resemblance. My own conviction, I must add, is that the likeness is unmistakable.

II. The Plaster Cast.

In the Museum of Florence there is a cast of Dante's face, taken in plaster and afterwards coloured. Making allowance for the difference of age, the correspondence with the Bargello portrait cannot be mistaken. Even more striking is the resemblance to the two portraits of Dante in Raphael's pictures of "Apollo and the Muses" and the *Disputa*, and to the Michelino portrait. It is known to have been in 1735 in the possession of the Barons of Porcigliano as a treasured possession. From them it passed to the Torrigiani family, and was given or sold by them to the Museum. The tradition was that it was taken by order of Dante's friend, Guido da Polenta of Ravenna, after the poet's death Another like cast passed into the hands of Mr Seymour Kirkup from thos of the sculptor Bartolini, who obtained it at Ravenna. A thir copy, which in 1831 was in the possession of the sculptor Stefano Ricci, and served as the basis of Fabri's medal in that year, has n traceable history Of these, the second is represented by thre photographs in Mr. Eliot Norton's privately printed volume *On th Original Portraits of Dante*, printed at Cambridge, Mass. U S.A., in 1865, as a contribution to the great sex-centenary festival, and i the frontispiece of the present volume. He finds in the mask itsel sufficient evidence of its genuineness (p. 14).

"It was plainly taken as a cast from a face after death. It ha none of the characteristics which a fictitious and imaginative repre sentation of the sort would be likely to present. It bears no trace of being a work of skilful and deceptive art. The difference in the fall of the two half-closed eyelids, the difference between the side of the face, the slight deflection in the line of the nose, the droop the corners of the mouth, and other delicate but not the less co vincing indications, combine to show that it was in all probabili taken directly from nature."

Comparing it with the Bargello portrait, he says (p. 18) of th latter —"It is the same face with that of the mask, but the one i the face of a youth with all triumphal splendour on its brow, th other of a man burdened with the dust and injury of age."